

TOM LOSELY: BOY BY J·E·COPUS·S·J. (CUTHBERT)





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"Say, I think I'll play with him," said (Continued, page 10).

EDWARD



TOM LOSELY: BOY

BY

REV. J. E. COPUS, S. J.

[CUTHBERT]

*Author of "Harry Russell," "St. Cuthbert's,"
"Shadows Lifted," etc.*

With Frontispiece

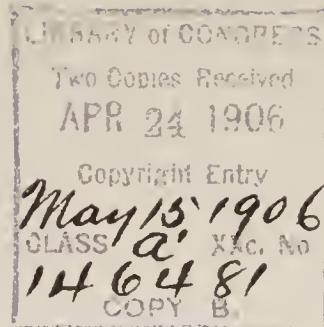


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TOM LOSELY: BOY

CHAPTER I.

TOM

“TOMMY!”
“Yes, ma.”

“Come into the house; it’s going to rain.”

“Yes, ma.”

Mrs. Losely stepped back into the house and closed the door. Master Tom, with a neighbouring chum, was playing at keeping store in a green summer-house down the garden path.

“Oh, bother! Fred,” said undutiful Tom, “ma always wants me to come into the house whenever I’m busy. What will all our customers do if I run away from the business?

“I guess I’ll forget to go. She won’t mind. Coffee, ma’am? How much? Some sugar-cured ham? Yes, ma’am, very fine, ma’am. The address, ma’am? I’ll send the boy with it right away,” and Master Tom took down an imaginary address in an imaginary note-book.

“Seven dollars and twenty-three cents, ma’am. Thank you, ma’am. I’ll be sure to send the things this morning,” and the embryo storekeeper

bowed the customer of his imagination out of the green arbor. He had forgotten all about his mother's call.

In a few minutes a few very large rain-drops began to rattle on the grape leaves above the boys' heads.

"My! did you hear that, Fred?" as the drops fell faster.

"Yes, and you'll catch it. Your mother called you, you know, and now you are going to get wet through."

"So will you."

"Oh! I don't mind. My ma didn't call me. Yours did. 'Sides, I have no big white collar to spoil. You have."

Tom Losely began to wish he had obeyed some minutes before. If his collar should be spoiled he knew it meant a whipping. He was not certain whether there was not one already coming for his present disobedience. To add further to his uneasy qualms, he heard his mother's voice again. As she had not heard him come indoors she was sure he was still in the summer-house; but to stir his conscience further she called:

"Tommy! Tommy! are you in the arbor yet?"

Master Tom did not answer.

"Thomas!" severely.

Still no signal of recognition from Tom.

“Very well, sir. You shall have a whipping when your father comes home.”

“Oh, ma!”

Remembrance of past, but not in the ordinary sense paternal interviews with his father had drawn forth the exclamation involuntarily from the boy’s lips.

“Come right into the house at once. Come, sir.”

“May I bring Fred Thorncroft with me, ma? He’s been keeping store with me all the morning.”

“No, send Fred home at once.”

“Oh, ma! we’ve got all our things out on the counter.”

“Now, Tom, do you hear me? Send Fred home, and come in at once. Don’t you see it’s already raining fast.”

“All right, ma. I’m coming.”

Still the little man did not make his appearance at the entrance of the grape arbor. He had to exchange, in boy fashion, many hasty confidences with his chum before they parted — Fred to cross the alley and run the length of his own garden; Tom to make a race for the kitchen door.

In the meantime the storm had gathered strength. When the two boys finally parted, it was raining very hard. Tom ran up the garden

path as fast as a pair of sturdy eight-year-old legs could carry him. He had his coat turned up over his head to save the precious broad white collar, which, if spoiled, he knew would be the occasion of severe punishment.

Perhaps it was owing to his eagerness to repair his former disobedience, or it may be it was really in punishment for it, that Tom met with a most unexpected disaster on his way up the garden path. The rain had made the clay walk quite slippery. Here and there were little pools of water. In his haste, trying to "run between the drops," Tom's foot slipped and he fell prone into one of the muddy, yellow puddles. His white frilled shirt, with its immaculate collar, was utterly ruined. From his elbows down and from his knees up his clothes were covered with sticky yellow clay. Was a boy ever in a worse plight? It was raining hard enough to wet him thoroughly. The delay of the fall was sufficient to cause him to be drenched.

What did Tom do in such a predicament? Boy-like — eight-year-old-boy-like — he simply lay where he had fallen and howled. This brought his mother a third time to the door.

"Get up, Tom. What are you lying there for?" called his now angry mother.

“I slipped and — and fell down — and spoiled my c-collar,” howled the besmirched Tom.

“Suppose you did, you silly boy, are you going to lie there all day in the rain? Get up this instant and come to the porch.”

Still crying lustily, Tom arose and, considering the state of the weather overhead, quite deliberately reached the porch, without a moment’s cessation of outward manifestation of his grief.

It must be confessed that this manifestation of grief was out of all proportion to the amount of injury received, even if we include the destruction of the expanse of collar, an ornament which was his mother’s special pride, and his own bane. But then Master Tom knew a thing or two, although he was only eight years old. He knew, for instance, that mamma’s heart was soft when her boy was in any kind of trouble. He knew — well, as much as most boys of eight.

He remembered — boys remember these things easily — how often she had brushed away the tears, and kissed and made well, or partly so, the cut or wounded finger, or the bruised hand or knee, to the utter forgetfulness of the promised condign punishment for the disobedience which had brought about the injury. Yes, Tom was, for his age, quite politic; and so he loudly blubbered on. He did not really cry — weep — but merely blubbered.

“There! there! stop your crying. You are not hurt, only wet and muddy. There is nothing to cry about.”

“My clothes are all mud, mamma.”

“All covered with mud, you mean. That comes of your disobedience.”

At which ominous remark Tom cried the louder, although not for contrition. He cried for fear of what would come upon him when his father should return. He felt — to use his own expression — he was “in for it” this time. He tried hard, knowing its power from past successes, to catch his mother’s eye with a peculiarly pleading and sorrowful expression in his own. It was of no use. The fates were against him to-day. His mother was angry. She had now no sympathetic or responsive glance for him in all his troubles. It was evidently Tom’s unlucky day.

At the present moment affairs looked quite dark for Master Tom. Another worrying thought came to him, too. If it cleared up there was to be that baseball game in the afternoon on the vacant lots a block away, and perhaps —.

This was a dreadful thought, worse than all the mud and all the rain. What if he should be kept in his room for the rest of the day, until his clothes were washed and dried! That would

be a catastrophe so appalling that Master Tom burst out crying in earnest this time.

That which Tom Losely dreaded happened. The promised whipping did not come just then. The maid, amid much scolding and no little kindly vicious pulling and pushing, took off his muddy shoes and divested him of considerable wearing apparel. He was then sent to the bath-room with some dry underwear and told to go to his bed-room to await further developments — and the Invincibles and the Unconquerables were to meet in battle royal that very afternoon! Was anything so unfortunate! The celebrated pitcher of the Invincibles an ignominious prisoner in his own house! Poor Tom!

CHAPTER II.

FRED

FRED THORNCROFT fared little better than Tom. It appears that his maternal orders had been that at the first sign of rain he was to leave the Losely summer-house and hasten home. He hastened home fast enough, but, as we know, he did not fulfil the first part of the injunction. He who hesitates is lost. Fred hesitated. He entered his house as dripping wet as Tom was, but without the addition of a quantity of mud on his clothes.

He met with his punishment, too. He was dismissed to his room just in the same way as Master Tom had been exiled.

Now it so happened that the two boys' rooms were in the rear of the two houses, both on the second story, and exactly opposite each other. This brief description is necessary in order that the reader may follow the events of that memorable afternoon.

Before we chronicle Fred's share in these events we must go back for a little while to Tom and his troubles.

Tom went sobbing from the bath-room to his exile.

“Mamma, I’ll be good, sure, if you will let me come downstairs,” he called over the banisters.

“No, sir. You must learn obedience.”

“But, mamma, I’m awful sorry. I am, really-truly.”

“Show it then by doing what you are told. Go to your room and stay there till I send for you.”

“Can’t I put on my Sunday clothes, and come down and stay with you in the parlor? I don’t want to go outdoors, mamma.”

Look out, Tom. Is that quite true? What boy of eight, when the rain is over, on a summer-day, actually wants to stay indoors with mother? Look out, Tom.

“No, sir,” answered his mother, “you have been very disobedient this morning. You must stay in your room until your father comes home.”

“Oh, ma! Pa won’t be home until after six, and I’ve got to pl—”

Tom checked himself in time. He suddenly thought of something. What was it? He began to cry once more, but not so vehemently as before. He went to his room, threw himself on his bed, and wept until the pillow was wet with his tears.

The tears were as much of passion as of sorrow. He was angry because he had been naughty; and he was angry because he had received punishment. It was not time just yet for him to see the justness of the punishment, or to accept it in the proper spirit.

Various thoughts passed through his mind. He would cry himself sick! Then his mother would be sorry for treating him in this way. He would empty his savings bank and run away and live among the Indians where he would never be locked up in his own room. He would run away to New York and become a newsboy and afterward be a millionaire, and then perhaps he would come home to a cruel father and mother, and perhaps he would forgive them. He would — and he suddenly plunged his hand into his pants' pocket at the thought — ah! it was not there! it was in his wet pants' pocket, and, of course, Jane would find it, and he would lose his treasure. The "it" was a flat bicycle wrench, around which he had often built wonderful visions. It often made him imagine he had a set of tools of an automobile outfit. In his present frame of mind he wished that he owned an automobile. Wouldn't he go speeding along the boulevard! Wouldn't there be consternation when the collision came! And wouldn't there be consternation, too, in the house, and wouldn't

the police-patrol wagon and the fire engines and everything come rushing up! Wouldn't all the neighbors gather to the scene, and wouldn't he refuse to be helped, and then wouldn't he — wouldn't a cruel mother repent of treating him so harshly — and then wouldn't they beg of him to come out and pitch in that game — wouldn't there be lots of customers for his sugar-cured hams — wouldn't there be seven dollars and twenty-three cents — wouldn't there be —

And so amid a multitude of thoughts and waning sobs, the little head sank upon the pillow, and he was ere long in that beautiful paradise of boyhood's dreamland.

Tom Losely did not know how long he had slept. He was busy in leading bands of Indians to attack his own home and rescue an imprisoned boy; in landing the largest black bass that ever existed even in an angler's dreams; in counting out his millionaire gold — when he was aroused by the maid rapping vigorously at the door of his room.

He jumped off the bed, rubbing his eyes vigorously. He was not yet half awake.

“Are the Indians come yet?” he asked the servant girl.

“Indians! what are you talking about, Master Tommy? Here's your dinner. Your mother says if you are very good and quiet and don't

cry any more, she'll think about letting you out by five o'clock, and your coat and pants is just that spoiled that you'll never be able to wear 'em again, an' that's my firm conviction."

Her firm conviction did not interest Tom in the least, but the tray she placed on the table did.

"What's that?" asked Tom in surprised disgust.

"That's your dinner, Master Tom."

"My dinner, that!" said poor Tom. It was a sad disappointment. Just a cut of beef, with plenty of potatoes, and some slices of bread. There was never a bit of pie, no cookies, not even an apple. Tom thought himself in hard lines indeed. He began to realize that sometimes the way of the transgressor is hard.

"Is that all?" he asked plaintively.

"Yes, your mother said you could draw your drinking-water from the tap in your own room.

Tommy went to the window and looked out. His lips were twitching with mortification. He did not want to let the servant girl see him cry over what he considered poor fare, yet he was very near doing so.

After a moment or two he put his hands into his pockets, turned his back to the window, and said mysteriously:

"You'll be sorry when they come, that's all."

“Now, Master Tom, don’t you go to be silly. You can’t scare me about your Indians. There ain’t none any more — leastways in these parts — so there!”

“Oh! all right. All you people downstairs will be sorry when midnight comes, and the wind howls, and the windows rattle, and Ches-nacha, the Little Chief, comes stealing up the garden path to the attack. We know the signals. He will shout to me: ‘Ne-heich. Chiwini chock-awayaya’ — come here, give me something to eat. Then I’ll answer the signal; I’ll say, ‘Onohi, neatho monathah esnanagh’ — young man, white man heap hungry. Then I’ll go away with him and become a menibe nenoway, a Northern Arapaho, and then you’ll all be sorry. It’ll be too late then to bring me any cookies or any apples.”

Tom’s knowledge of a few Indian words, which he had picked up somewhere, sounded terrible to the untutored mind of the maid. But she understood the last sentence and its implied wish for some sweet cakes and fruit.

She liked Master Tom. Many a quarter of pie had found its way, in days gone by, to his room through her instrumentality.

“Now, Master Tom, stop talking them wicked words and making them there threats. You make me feel all creepy, indeed you do. If you’ll be very good, I’ll slip up here after the missus

and the other children have had dinner, and I don't know what will be in my pockets. It won't be needles nor thimbles nor thread."

With this Tom was fain to be content. He sat down to his meagre, but certainly substantial, meal with hope of what the future would bring him by way of dessert.

While taking his dinner, Tom faced the window. He had barely finished his beef and bread and potatoes, which he had eaten quickly and heartily, aided by a healthy appetite, when, chancing to look through the window, he saw another boy's head at another window across the two gardens. He became interested at once. Who was it? He thought at first that it was the head of his friend and chum, Fred Thorne-croft. But no, Fred could not be in durance vile. Fred had not fallen down and made himself one big mud-spot. Then, Fred had no big collar to spoil and jeopardize his peace of mind. Fred's mother, he thought, was more sensible than his own. She didn't make Fred wear this great yoke. He was allowed to wear a neat stand-up collar. It couldn't be Fred in that room, yet "birds of a feather flock together." There was a boy in that room. That fact, under the circumstances, interested Tommy as nothing else would have done.

Hastily finishing the remainder of his dinner, he threw open the window.

“Hi hi-i-i-lo,” he shouted, “Hi hi-i-i-lo.” This failed to attract the attention of the boy opposite. Then Tom leaned far out of the window and whistled the universal boys’ call, which is nearest represented in words by We-wau-wee, or Milwaukee, the middle sound being about a third of an octave lower than the other two. What English-speaking boy throughout the world does not know that signal?

As soon as Fred Thorncroft heard the universal call, his head, too, was out of the window. The two imprisoned boys were too far apart to hold a conversation without shouting loud enough to attract the attention of their respective mammas, or their domestics. There were two rather long city gardens and an alley between them.

If the gentle lady who is at this moment reading this story to her sons gathered around her knees imagines that distance was an insurmountable barrier to communication between Tom and Fred, let her ask her Harold or Horace, or Terrence or Aloysius, or any other of her own about it. They, being real boys, could of course give her plenty of information such as would surprise her by reason of its ingenuity.

As soon as Tommy and Fred had established the identity of each other, they at once, as by

a species of intuition, set about devising means and methods of intercommunication. It did not take them many minutes to establish a code of signals which would have been the admiration of the navy, or of the bravest Indian chief of the plains.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIGNALS

BY MEANS of the signals Tom told Fred of his unfortunate fall into the pool of muddy water. In pantomimic gestures he described accurately the event and the consequences. In answer to a gesture-question, Fred Thorncroft informed his friend that he had escaped a fall, but not a wetting, and barely a whipping. He was now detained in his own room for his disobedience. Tom inquired of Fred, by means of some really very clever gestures, what was to be the fate of the Invincibles-Unconquerables ball game, which had been set for that afternoon. Fred was in a quandary. He shrugged his shoulders and threw open the palms of his hands in sign of surrender and defeat.

Presently Tom, to Fred's surprise, quite suddenly disappeared from the window. He had heard a rap at the door. Not wishing to be caught holding communication with any confederate outside, he had jumped away from the window, and stood at the table when the girl entered.

"My goodness, Tommy! did you eat all them potatoes, and bread, and meat? You must 'a' been awful hungry."

Tom certainly was before he sat down to his plain, but plentiful, meal.

"A feller must eat something, Jane," he said evasively.

"But there was enough for a full-grown man."

"I guess I can eat as much as any full-grown man that I know," said Tom.

Which was perfectly true, and Jane ought to have known it. She did know it from past experience, but just now she seemed to have forgotten.

"I suppose, then, a couple of puff-tarts and a couple of red apples and a banana ain't no use now?" she said.

Master Tommy Losely began to be frightened; was he going to lose his dessert after all? With ready wit he put his hand to his stomach and tried — not very successfully, but earnestly — to assume a sickly expression.

"I think," he said, "I think, Jane, I believe I am a little sick at the stomach. Two cream puffs I know would settle it. Don't you think those nice large cream puffs which you make so well would do me good? You know I caught an awful ducking this morning. I may take cold yet."

Jane laughed heartily at the boy's diplomacy. She was very good-natured. Tom was a great favorite of hers. She often mitigated the rigors of justice in his regard. She, being minister plenipotentiary of the department of cuisine, was an important personage in the household. Tom knew his powers. He had often cultivated her, to his own profit. The absolute mistress of the pantry is a somebody of great importance in any boy's eyes.

She liked his bonny, bright face and, if the truth were told, she would by far rather see him in all sorts of pranks and scrapes than behold him a "ninnny and a sissy milksop."

"Well, Tommy, is you sick now, or is you goin' to be sick? Which?"

"Why?" asked Tom, not knowing which was the safer ground to take.

"'Cause," said the maid, "if you is now, I think p'raps the cream tarts will cure you right off, and if you is going to be sick, the red apples and the banana, maybe, will prevent it."

She drew out of her ample pocket a paper bag, opened it, and temptingly displayed two delicious cream puffs lightly resting on the heavier fruit.

"Oh! oh! Jane, you're a — you're a duck!" and Tom was ready to throw his arms around her neck and reward her for her kindness by a good sounding smack of a kiss.

“There! there! now be a good boy. If you are real quiet, I’ll ask your mother to let you down at three o’clock instead of waiting till your father comes home.”

“You’re real good, Jane. I wish you was my mother, that I do,” said the boy, while with one arm he tried to embrace her, the other hand being engaged in holding the remains of tart number one.

“Lawd’s sakes! just hear the boy,” said the good-natured domestic, laughing aloud. “Now you just try to be good, and I’ll do what I can for you.”

It was a proud boy that at once spread out two apples, a banana, and one cream puff on the window-sill in full view of the longing but too distant Fred Thorncroft. Tommy pretended to throw one of the apples across the lots to Fred. This both knew would be a foolish thing to try. The apple would probably fall in the alley midway between the two houses.

Suddenly Tom thought of a device by which he could talk to his companion. Securing a large piece of packing-paper, he twisted it up trumpet-fashion, and made a temporary but very successful megaphone. He tested it at once.

“Get some paper, Fred, and make a trumpet like mine.”

Thorncroft’s head immediately ducked down

from the window. In a few minutes he reappeared with a trumpet, a duplicate of Tom's. Both were very successful, the boys requiring but little effort to hear each other without raising their voices enough to disturb those in the rooms below.

“Where'd ye get the goodies?” was Fred's first question.

“Jane. She's fine. Played a little sick.”

“Can't ye throw me an apple?”

“Couldn't reach you if I tried, and I might smash a window.”

“Pshaw! guess that's true. I'm awful hungry for fruit.”

“Didn't you get any dinner?”

“Sure; I got some, but no pie, nor nothing.”

“That's me too. If it hadn't been for Jane, I wouldn't have had any dessert to-day, sure.”

“Say, Tom, how about that ball game?”

“I dunno.”

“The Unconquerables will say we were afraid of them.”

“Not much.”

“They will though. What yer goin' to do 'bout it?”

“Dunno.”

“Say, Tom!”

“Well?”

"Suppose you — we — get out of the windows?"

"And break my neck — not much."

"Stupid! don't you see your coal-shed comes up quite close to your window. It's the easiest thing in the world to drop to that. Then you've only got a few feet to jump."

Tom Losely looked out and saw the plan was quite feasible.

"Supposin' I do. We can't play unless you are there to catch, can we?"

"Guess not."

"Well, then?"

Fred looked out of his window. There was no coal-shed near his house.

"Fred!" megaphoned Tom.

"Well, what d'ye want?" answered Fred.

"See that big water-pipe near your window? You dassen't climb down that."

Fred had never thought of doing such a thing.

"My goodness! Tom Losely, do you take me for a cat? Course I can't climb down that."

"I could if I was there."

"No, you couldn't."

"Yes, I could. It's dead easy."

"How?"

Tom showed in pantomime how it could be done, or at least how he thought it could be done.

"You dassen't try," said Tom.

“I dare, if you’ll jump off the wood-shed.”

“I ain’t going to take a dare from you.”

“Well, I ain’t going to take a dare from you, neither,” said Fred.

“All right. When shall we do it?”

“Right now.”

“Say, Fred, it’s too early yet for the game. It’s only half past one, and the game don’t start till three.”

“All right; we will wait till a quarter to three.”

The interval passed slowly for both. After accepting each other’s “dare,” conversation lagged. The Invincibles baseball paraphernalia was kept in Master Fred Thorncroft’s wood-shed, which abutted the alley. So if the two succeeded in making their descent the game could be saved.

About five minutes to three two small boys might have been seen running rapidly along the alley toward the vacant lots not far away. Thorncroft was a little dazed and shaken. He had let go his hold when about half-way down the stand-pipe. He was considerably jarred by his fall, but small boys’ bones are soft and not easily broken.

Tommy Losely was more successful. At least he reached the ground unhurt. His danger lay in being detected. He had to make a side jump from his window to the roof of the wood-shed.

This could not be done without considerable noise. Suppose Jane or his mother happened to be in the shed or in the summer-kitchen at that moment!

The fact was, Jane was actually in the shed at the time. The noise frightened her for a moment. She quickly recovered, and assured herself the young rascal was unhurt. As she heard him scamper along the shingles and down, she did not think it worth while to raise a hue and cry. She knew the latter would come soon enough, unless Master Tommy were more successful in escaping punishment than he usually was.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT GAME

OWING to the untoward events of the morning, Master Thomas Losely, pitcher of the Invincibles, appeared on the town lots diamond to meet the redoubtable Unconquerables of the neighboring parish school, clad in a very primitive manner. He wore merely an undershirt, a pair of old knee-pants, black stockings, and — slippers. It is true that they were fine dancing slippers, but scarcely suitable for the more strenuous occupation of baseballing. More especially were they unsuited for Tom's special and famous play of sliding to bases, which, being a good imitator, he had copied from older players. Fortunately he had found his red baseball cap in his room, so he was happy.

Happy? Well, not exactly, that afternoon. By a strange coincidence, Fred and he, that is, catcher and pitcher of the Invincibles, seemed to dislike looking into each other's eyes that day. Each knew he had done wrong. Each knew, also, the risk he ran; and each knew unmistak-

ably that there had to be a reckoning on his return. Both knew their re-entrance must be as public as their exit had been surreptitious, and both realized there was trouble in the future. Yet all this did not prevent either from playing good ball; it rather added zest to their efforts. Never did Tom do such good pitching; never was Fred so sure in his catching.

The game started a little before four o'clock. By the time it was well under way there was quite a respectable crowd of people present to witness it. Street-car motormen slowed up as they passed the vacant lots. Delivery wagons lined the street. Tom felt himself a hero as he was cheered time and again upon retiring one after another of his opponents.

It so happened that Dr. Losely came home from his downtown office a little earlier than usual that afternoon. About five o'clock, seeing so large a crowd on the vacant lots near his home, he stepped off the car to see what the excitement was. He was not very much surprised to learn that it was a baseball match between the teams of two parish schools, but he was surprised, at a change of innings, when the Unconquerables went to the bat, to see his own boy take the pitcher's plate in such a remarkable costume.

“What on earth has got into his mother's head

to let him come out of the house in those outlandish clothes?" thought he.

He did not disturb the boy, however, in the midst of his triumph. He was pleased that any of his children should show excellence of any kind. He argued that from excellence in sport would come excellence later in study, and, later still, excellence in a professional or business career.

Then, he was a bit of a baseball enthusiast himself, and, consequently, quite willing that his boy should take as much enjoyment out of it as he himself did.

The game was a close one. In the eighth inning the two teams — true to their names — were a tie. In the ninth inning the Invincibles made one run by a good three-bagger by Master Tom, letting home a man on third base. Tom, although he reached third, did not get home.

When the Unconquerables went to bat, Tom Losely's curves fanned out three men in short order. Did you ever hear such shouting! His father shouted as loud as anybody. They carried the boy off the field on their shoulders. What though his dancing slippers were irretrievably ruined! What were slippers at such a time! What did broken pants matter on an occasion like this! Baseball heroes can not bother themselves with such small matters,

“Come, Tommy, you have had glory enough for one day,” said his father; “let us go home and get some supper. Where did you get such an arm, Tom?”

At the mention of home and supper all Tom’s glory faded. He had risked much for this game. He felt very uncomfortable now for the near future. There was at the present moment a much more genuine sickly look on his face than there had been in the cream puff incident.

“What’s the matter, Tom?” asked his father, seeing the change come over his face. “Has the game been too much for you? Come home, and I’ll get mother to make some lemonade. I am as dry as a fish — don’t think I’ve shouted so much in years.”

“I d — don’t want to go home — just now, pa,” said Tom.

“Why, lad, what’s the matter with you? Don’t you think your mother will be pleased with you?”

If the doctor could have read his son’s thoughts at that moment he would have learned unmistakably that Tom thought she would not. We have said that Master Thomas Losely was politic. He did not answer his father’s question.

“You go home, papa, first; I’ll come in in a little while.”

“What’s wrong, Tom? Why! you’re lame.

How came you to think of playing in slippers? They are spoiled, too. You should always wear a pair of good stout shoes when playing baseball."

Dr. Losely still held his boy's hand. Seeing him holding back — for what reason he could not imagine — he relinquished his hand.

"You go home first, papa, please. Then I'll come in."

Just at that moment Fred Thorncroft came up and looked into Tom's face. The look was so quizzically peculiar that it struck Dr. Losely as very strange. He remembered it for many a day after. Tom understood it well enough.

"All right," said the father, "if the baseball hero of the day refuses me the honor of coming home with me, I suppose I must go alone," and he laughingly walked in the direction of his home.

"Gee whiz!" said Fred, "you are in for it, Tom, when he finds out. Won't he be mad!"

"Guess you ain't any better off," answered Tom.

"Guess I ain't."

"How are you going to get home?"

"I dunno."

"You can't climb up that water-pipe."

"I'm not going to try. Coming down is bad enough. I'm going to face the music."

"Guess I'll have to, too," said Tom, most lugubriously. Suddenly he brightened.

"There's Jane. She'll help me out, you bet."

Tom placed, from previous experience, almost unlimited confidence in the powers of Jane. But then, all former escapades were trivial compared to this one, and he very seriously doubted Jane's influence in the present case.

Tom Losely lingered on the field of glory for full half an hour. The flattery he received would have completely turned his head at any other time. Just now it was overshadowed and poisoned by the certainty of coming evil.

Like many an older Tom, he had taken all risks for present pleasure, without, at the time, counting the cost. Now his time of reckoning had come, as it came or will come to older Toms as well. What would he not give now to be safe back in his own little room. But that was impossible. He could not recall the past. He must now take the consequences of his deeds.

Master Tom Losely had the strangest experience of his life that night, and one which he will never forget.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOME-COMING

THE baseball hero sauntered home with laggard step. He was lame. He had to walk gingerly in consequence. One slipper was so badly torn that without careful stepping it would not stay on his foot.

Why was Tom so careful about the click of the garden gate in the rear of the house? He was not always so considerate. Coming up the garden path he kept as much as possible out of sight of the sitting-room window. Why? He dodged from one oleander to another and at last reached the door of the summer-kitchen.

Standing on one side, he called softly:

“Jane! Jane!”

The domestic was there, brewing the tea.

“Oh! Master Tom, how could you? Your mother has been worryin’ all the afternoon about you. I thought perhaps you had fallen into the water-barrel.”

“I wish I had now,” said the boy, ruefully.

“Oh! Tommy, you wicked boy! How dare you say such naughty things?”

“Wish I had,” repeated Tom.

“If you say that again, I’ll go and call your mother straight away.”

“Is she very angry, Jane?”

“I guess she’s considerable riled. You won’t get off easy, that’s sure.”

Tom did not expect to be let off lightly. He had begun to realize the gravity of his offence. There was a certain amount of manliness in his composition. What boy who plays ball well has not this quality? During the last few minutes he had made up his mind to take whatever punishment was in store for him, without excuse and without whimpering.

It was lucky for the youngster that he had adopted this course of action, for, when his father learned of his disobedience, he was at a loss what punishment to inflict, and determined to be guided to a large extent by the manner his son conducted himself when he came home.

“Is supper ready, Jane?” asked Tom.

“Just. It’s six o’clock, and master’s hungry. It will be ready in one minute.”

“I’m so glad. I’m awful hungry.”

“Why, bless the boy, with that dinner you ate, and them cream puffs and fruit too!”

“I have been playing ball all the afternoon,” said Tom, with a superiority of manner which the simple girl could not fathom.

"Shall I tell your mamma you have come home?"

"I suppose you must."

The girl left the summer-kitchen with the tea-pot, and went into the house. Tom spent an extremely unpleasant two minutes.

"Come to supper, Tommy," the boy heard his mother call a moment later. Was Tom ever more surprised in his life? He had expected — what had he not expected? And here was the usual invitation to supper as if nothing had gone amiss. Oh! perhaps papa had begged him off in view of the fine pitching. Whatever may have been the cause, he took heart of grace and walked boldly into the dining-room.

Herein Tom made a mistake. He should have answered back from the kitchen that he would be there in a minute — that he was washing his hands and face. In the meantime he should have coaxed his favorite, Jane, to run up the back stairs and bring him a decent coat to put on. But poor Tom forgot all the amenities. He walked in boldly.

When his mother saw him she gave a gasp and stared.

"Did you go out dressed like that?" she asked.

"Run upstairs, Tom, and put on some respectable clothes," said his father.

With a grateful look at his father, he made for the stairs. In a minute or two he came down. There was evidence of at least an attempt at washing his hands and face and of combing his tousled hair. He had slipped on a neat red and black sweater, and over that he wore a coat.

Not knowing at what moment the storm would break, wise Tom determined to make hay while the sun shone. He did not wait to be told a second time to begin. Everybody knows the capacity of the appetite of a hungry boy who has been playing ball two or three hours; and it should be understood that tea at the Losely's was but a frugal meal, the edibles being of the lighter kind, and therefore much more would be required to satisfy hunger.

The greatest puzzle to Tom, during that meal, was the perfect silence on part of both father and mother with respect to his transgression. To Tom the silence was ominous. He would rather have had it over and done with, even to an interview with his father in the wood-shed.

Wasn't it strange? — half an hour or so before his father was all enthusiasm with regard to his skill. Now he spoke no word of baseball. He certainly by this time must have heard of Tom's getting out of the window — yet never

a word about it. It was all very mysterious. Had they both forgotten and forgiven it? Tom hoped against hope that it might be so, yet he did not dare open his mouth at table — that is, for purposes of conversation. Otherwise it was opened to good purpose. He was more puzzled than ever when, the meal being finished, he heard his father say to his mother :

“In about an hour, mamma.”

His mother answered :

“Very well, dear.”

When Tom left the table he suddenly became extraordinarily anxious about some school lessons which he had missed during the school year. I wonder if any boy could give the reason why Tom Losely, right in the middle of vacation, should go to his room and to his books, and that without the slightest coercion. In about an hour Tom heard his father call upstairs :

“Tom, are you busy?”

“No, father, I’m learning some lessons.”

Tom was not quite sure, but he thought he heard his father give a short, sudden chuckle of amused but suppressed laughter. What do people want to laugh at a studious and industrious boy for?

“Come down to the front porch, will you?”

“Yes, father.”

The boy came down in fear and trembling.

He found his father sitting in an easy rocker. His mother was absent.

“Come here, my boy.”

Tom approached nearer to his father, who took hold of him and drew him close to his knee by the side of the chair.

“Tommy, son, what did you do this afternoon?”

“Wrong, sir,” whispered the brave little boy, without a moment’s hesitation.

“What did you do? Tell me all,” said the father, who kindly stroked the boy’s head.

“I—I runned away—”

“Yes.”

“I jumped—I mean I got out of the window and ran away to play ball.”

“Was not that very wrong, Tom?”

“Yes, sir; very wicked.”

Brave Tom Losely! Perhaps he might not have been so brave if he had not so kind and so judicious a father to manage him. How many a boy has been ruined in the administration of punishment.

“What are you going to do about it, son?” asked his father, who wanted the boy to take the initiative in reparation of the fault.

“Go and beg mamma’s pardon, sir.”

“And what next?”

“Yours.”

“And what after that?”

“Ask God to forgive me, and our holy Mother to pray for me.”

“Good. Don’t you expect some punishment from me and your mother, Tom?”

“Sure, pa.”

“What do you think it will be, my boy?”

“A whipping, sir,” answered Tom, in the faintest of whispers, yet bravely.

“Do you expect that?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you think you deserve that?”

“Yessur,” came the answer in the very faintest whisper.

“Well, I will think it over. Go, now, and talk to your mother. She’s waiting for you in the parlor.”

Tom’s father was satisfied with the manly attitude of the boy. There is no denying that if Tom had done any sniveling or made any excuses that night matters would have gone extremely hard with him.

His mother was sitting in an easy chair in the dark, awaiting Tom’s appearance. She had heard every word spoken on the veranda.

“Is that my boy?” she asked.

“It’s me, ma.”

“Come here, Tommy.”

Master Thomas came close up to his mother’s

knee. Instead of standing there, he knelt down and burying his head in her lap gave way to a flood of quiet tears. She let him cry without interrupting him. When the sobs had somewhat quieted down, she asked him:

“Tommy, why do you cry?”

“Because, mamma, I’ve been naughty.”

“In getting so wet?”

“No, mamma, I didn’t think much then. I didn’t mean to be naughty then. But this afternoon when I got out of the window.”

“Did you, or Fred, suggest it?”

“He did, mamma, but I did it, though.”

“That’s right, my son. Never try to hide a fault. Always manfully acknowledge it. There is nothing so mean or small as half-truthful excuses. Are you sorry for your fault now?”

“Yes, ma’am, I’m very sorry.”

“And you won’t be disobedient again?”

“No, ma’am.”

“You promise me this, Tommy?”

“Yes, mamma.”

“Then I know my boy will keep his promise.”

“Sure.”

“You will have to do some penance for this, Tom. Are you willing?”

“I am, ma; but I hope it won’t be too hard.”

He expected a good whipping, but there are some penances much harder for boys than that.

Master Tom showed his best side to his mother and father that night, but he had not ceased to be a real, live, American boy for all that.

“What if I forbid you to play ball for a week?”

“Oh, ma!” There was real agony in his tone. Then the manly little fellow remembered himself instantly. Yet the tears were in his eyes when he said:

“All right, ma; I won’t. Kiss me, mamma.”

And a mother’s kiss, the most sacred thing on earth, sealed the compact, giving strength to the boy’s resolutions and peace to his troubled little breast.

Thank God there are thousands of such homes as the Loselys’. From such spring the great men of the world.

CHAPTER VI.

NEXT DAY

A WHOLE week of it in the middle of the summer vacation and no baseball! Just think of it, you boys. How would you like such a punishment? How many of the readers of this story of "Tom Losely: Boy" would keep a promise like Tom's?

It is true that Master Tom had been disobedient twice in one day, but it is also true that he was sorry at night. It is true that he had done wrong, but is it not also true that he accepted the punishment in the evening in the manliest and very best disposition?

Did he perform faithfully the penance his mother had imposed upon him? We shall see. When he went to bed that night he felt so good, and at the same time so bad, that he did not know what to make of it.

He felt so sorry for his fault that he wished his father had whipped him "good and hard," and he felt such peace and ease of mind over his confession and the gentle ways of father and

mother that he determined never, never, never to be naughty again.

Surely, to bring about such results with the least amount of irritation, and without arousing any other passion, of fear, or dread, or dislike for parents, or a sense of injustice, was the very acme of perfection in domestic and family government.

It must not be supposed that Tom ceased for a moment to be Tom, or became a "goody-goody." Far from it. The next day he was as full of mischief and as fun-loving as ever; as big a tease of his mother as heretofore, and the bane as well as the joy of Jane.

This kindly domestic had taken care to have his clothes nicely cleaned by the next morning, and his shoes brightly polished. Tom appeared at breakfast the next morning with another broad-collared and frilled blouse, as bright and as fresh as though he had never in all his life been caught in a shower or fallen in the mud.

Perhaps some readers want to know what Master Thomas Losely looked like. Well, he was just such a boy in appearance as you would like your younger brother to be—and that is saying a great deal, isn't it?

Tom had a fine head of curly black hair, which he found difficult to keep tidy, not on account of the hair itself, but by reason of his own rest-

less movements. When untidy it did not even look bad. Some boys are that way. There is something about them so pleasing that even untidiness does not exactly displease. Then, Tom was a boy. That means that his normal condition was one of more or less untidiness. I know what you say is true — yes — boys that are boys can not always be fit to receive company in the parlor. Jane knew that, too. It may safely be said that Master Tom, except very early in the morning — would not pass Jane's inspection. But you know, don't you boys, that was not Tom's fault — was it? Boys are not supposed to live for company receiving altogether.

Thomas Losely had a broad square forehead, and strong black eyebrows, which overhung a pair of mischievous, laughing, loveable steel-gray eyes, which snapped and sparkled in fun, or were quick to soften in response to a mother's love or a father's kindness. They were the best feature of Tom's face. His nose was just a wee bit short and inclined slightly to tip-tilt. The lips were well formed and as red as cherries. When the boy laughed he showed a set of perfect, white teeth, very pleasing to see. They were not yet affected by overindulgence in candies and sweet stuffs. The whole face was round and chubby and very attractive, indicating a character of magnificent possibilities.

We know what kind of arm he possessed. A boy that could pitch a whole game and fan out three in one-two-three order in the ninth inning was "all right," wasn't he, boys?

His little legs were just as sturdy. They were short, and therefore he was not so good a runner on bases as his friend Fred Thorncroft, who was taller and not so stout.

There! You have a picture of Tommy Losely, and surely a more delightful little fellow never got into scrapes, or mud-puddles, or had the nose bleed, or wore a black eye.

Tom's friend Fred was of a different type. They were inseparable companions at the Sisters' school — the two occupying a double desk. The greatest threatened punishment for these two was a promise from the Sister that if they would not keep quiet and learn their lessons she would separate them. One day she did separate them for a whole morning, and that day life was for both a hollow sham. Tom actually cried one day this summer when Fred told him that he was going away to another academy school the next September.

Fred Thorncroft was several inches taller than his almost inseparable companion. His hair was a rich warm brown color, although of not nearly so luxuriant a growth as Tom's big black crop. He was much paler than Tom, not having the

way of getting sun-burned as easily as his companion. His face was rather long, with regular features and eyes inclined to be blue. His eyebrows were somewhat lighter in color than his hair. His chin was inclined to be pointed. He was a distinguished, almost aristocratic-looking boy — but a real boy for all that. He rather represented the Teutonic type, while his friend Tom was a child of the sun — of the Latin race. Yet they were both American, and if you had ever been brave enough to pass a Fourth of July in their company, you would never after have doubted their loyalty to the flag or their sound citizenship.

At breakfast the morning after Tom's "naughtiness," Dr. Losely asked his son:

"What penance did your mother give you last night, son?"

"I mustn't play for a week, papa."

The father looked across the table at his wife in astonishment. He considered that an almost impossible punishment for a young boy, and very excessive. Mrs. Losely did not speak. She let Tom explain himself.

"That's a big punishment, eh?"

"Yes, sir; but I was bad yesterday."

"Glad to see you acknowledge your fault, my son. But what are you going to do for a whole week?"

“ Oh ! there are lots of other games, pa.”

“ But I thought you said you must not play for a week ? ”

“ Ball, pa.”

“ Oh ! ”

Of course “ must not play ” meant must not play ball with Tom. What else could it mean to the celebrated pitcher of the Invincibles ?

“ So you are going to keep off the diamond for a whole seven days ? ”

“ I promised mamma, pa.”

“ Good boy. It will be a lesson for you. It will do you good. Always keep your promises.”

After breakfast, with his mother’s kiss on his forehead, Master Tom bounded down the stairs and out to the kitchen porch. Soon his father and mother heard his famous call-whistle which sounded so much like Mil-wau-kee, and they both smiled.

The signal was soon responded to by Fred Thorncroft — “ We-wau-we, We-wau-we.”

“ Come over,” beckoned Tom.

“ All right,” came the answering signal, perfectly understood by the two boys. Tom sauntered down to the garden gate. Fred opened his across the alley at the same moment. Their greetings were somewhat peculiar this morning.

“ Whippin’ ? ” asked Fred.

"Naw. Worse'n that," answered Tom.
"You?"

"Um-um," answered Fred. The sound of assent was emphatic. It had a rising inflection at the end which put it out of the sphere of doubt completely.

"Hurt much?"

"Course not; whippings don't hurt, do they?"

"But I mean, much?"

"I should think it did. I can feel it yet," and poor Fred began to rub those parts of his anatomy where such punishments are usually administered.

"Sit down and tell me all about it."

"Don't care to. How did you get off? You couldn't get worse'n a whippin'."

"Couldn't I? I guess I could."

"What was it?"

"Guess."

"Can't; tell me."

"Guess."

"Bread and water?"

"Nope."

"No swimming at the swimming-school?"

"Nope."

"Oh! I can't guess. Tell me."

"No; guess again."

"We ain't going out to your Uncle William's place next week!" guessed Fred in alarm.

It had been arranged that the two friends were to spend a couple of weeks of the summer vacation out in the country on Tom's uncle's farm.

"Nope. Papa and mamma said you and I and they were going out next Sunday after early Mass. Ma's going to stay out and pa's coming home Sunday night."

"Ah!" said Fred, with a sigh of relief. He was afraid that the punishment which was "worse than a whipping" might have taken that form.

"Say, Tom. You're kind of mean this morning. Why can't you tell a fellow?"

"Guess once more," said Tom.

"I can't. I give it up."

Tom paused tantalizingly. He knew the effect the forthcoming announcement would have on his chum. He said slowly, with a pause between each word:

"No — base — ball — for — a — week!"

"What!" shouted Fred, terribly excited. "What! Haven't we arranged a return match for next Thursday with the Unconquerables? Did you tell 'em that?"

"No."

"Tom Losely, I think you are going crazy. We can't put that game off."

"Have to," said Tom, sturdily, "or play without me."

“Play without you,” sneered Fred. “That’s great talk, ain’t it? You know we can’t play without the crack pitcher.”

“Can’t help it.”

“Yes, you can.”

“No, I can’t. You can put the game off until we get back from the country.”

“It will be too late then. It will be close to school time again, and our club will be broken up by then.”

“Can’t help that, Fred.”

“Say, Tom,” said Thorncroft, coaxingly, “can’t you beg off for just that one game?”

“Frederick Thorncroft,” said Master Tom, quite solemnly, “I am not going to try. I done wrong yest’day, and I’m going to be good now.”

Good boy, Tom. Your grammar is a little at fault, but your principles are all right.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OTHER FELLOWS

IT WAS not the easiest thing in the world for Master Tom Losely to talk to his bosom friend in the way recorded in the last chapter. Tom felt fully the humiliation of thwarted plans. He was keenly alive to the mortification, yet, brave lad as he was, he was determined to undergo the full punishment.

Telling Fred, his daily companion, was hard enough, but that afternoon he was to be more sorely tried.

After dinner Tom began to busy himself about his little flower garden, in which he took a great deal of pride. He knew that he was going away at the end of the week, for fourteen days or more, so he wanted to trim up everything as neatly as possible, in order to prevent too luxurious a growth during his absence. He pegged down the verbenas, cut and pruned his petunias, and snipped off overblown stalks and withered leaves of the geraniums. He was as busy as a bee, and as happy as a lark.

Keeping a flower garden is a fine occupation for boys. It gives them a taste for the beautiful; there is an amount of healthful exercise in it, and it is one of those things which fill the mind with pleasing thoughts. What is nicer than making mamma's breakfast bouquet fresh every day yourself, or plucking papa's boutonnière as he starts off for his downtown office. When Mrs. Losely had company to dinner, Tom had no greater satisfaction than to be able to supply the table decorations, and no greater reward than to hear them praised and watch his mother's pleased look.

"Tom Losely, come over to the lots. The boys want ye."

The voice came from a boy who was swinging on the back garden gate.

"Hello, Digger!" said Tom, still working away at his flower bed, "what do you want?"

This particular boy had received the name of Digger from his success in unearthing worms when the boys of the neighborhood wanted bait for their fishing excursions. He had wonderful facility in finding worms, especially at night with a lantern. He would take a light and walk across a well-kept lawn, and there find worms by the dozen when other boys could scarcely succeed in getting one.

"I told you," said the boy, "the fellows over on the lot want to see you 'bout something."

"What do they want? I am busy and can't come."

"No, you ain't. You're only pretending. That garden will keep. That won't keep you."

"Yes, it will. I'm going away soon, and I want to fix things up."

"Oh! come on, Tom. Say, the fellows got a proposition to make to you. I think that was the word they told me to use."

"A prop'sition! What's that?"

"I dunno. Something about the club."

"I am not going to play next Thursday."

"So Fred Thorncroft told us. But come over. Perhaps you could suggest to the captain some one to take your place."

That was the way the artful Digger induced Tom to go over to the vacant lots. When there Tom was soon surrounded by the enthusiastic baseball players who had played with him or had witnessed his playing the day before.

"Tom, the return match with the Unconquerables has been set for Thursday afternoon. Course you're going to pitch?" said the captain.

"No, I am not."

"Not going to pitch! Why? Isn't this vacation time? Can't we play any day we like?"

"Yes, you can play any day you like. I—I can't — play — this week."

"Oh! he's got a glass arm!" said Johnny

Smith, a boy who was jealous of him because the captain had not given him a coveted place on the nine.

“I haven’t, neither,” said Tom; “my arm’s good as yours and better.”

“Why don’t you play, then?”

“’Cause I don’t. That’s all.”

“He’s afraid,” said one of the players. “He won the game for us, and he is afraid to play another for fear of a come-down.”

“I’m not, either,” said Tom.

“Why don’t you play, then?”

“That’s my business, an’ not yours,” said Tom rudely.

“Oh! Tom Losely, don’t act this way. Play the game, like a good fellow. We want you,” said the captain, a good friend of Tom.

“Sorry,” said Tom. “I can’t play this week and be a good fellow.”

“Why not?”

“Because I have been forbidden to, by mamma, for disobedience,” answered Tom bravely, but blushing violently.

For a moment there was a hush. Tom stood squirming, first on one foot and then on the other. You would, however, had you been there, have seen a fine determined look in Master Tom’s eyes at the moment. It was a look of moral bravery; a determination which makes a hero. Fred

Thorncroft saw it, and loved his friend all the more for it.

Fred was sorry now that he had told the boys of Tom's determination. He did not realize how hard it would be for his friend to withstand the pleading, and the ill-natured remarks of some, but he did admire the firm stand his friend had taken.

"Oh! he's tied to his mamma's apron strings," sneered one big rough boy.

Tom blushed more deeply.

"No, I am not."

"Yes, you are, else you would play the day after to-morrow."

"I am not. Mamma told me not to play any more this week."

"Well, isn't that being tied to her apron strings?"

"I don't see that," remarked Fred.

"No, it is not," said Tom. "It's being obedient to your parents, as the catechism teaches."

Certainly Tom Losely was trying to expiate his fault of the day before. He was acting with the best of intentions, at all events. This, however, did not prevent him from getting quite angry at the taunts. What made the situation more difficult was that several of the boys had an inkling of Tom's escape from his room the previous day, in order to do what he now refused

to do. They did not realize that sorrow for a misdeed, and repentance, and a determination not to do wrong again could intervene within the space of twenty-four hours. And all these dispositions had really come to Tom.

“Oh, you’re a sissy boy — a mammie’s kid,” said the big boy.

Tom knew what he meant to imply. The boy wanted to insinuate that he was effeminate, girlish and silly. Now there was not a particle of any of these qualities in Master Tom Losely’s make-up. Every one acquainted with him knew this. Every one knew that he was a manly, sturdy, real boy. We who have followed these pages thus far can see that the accusation was not true in the least.

Tom resented it. He hated to be called girlish. He also disliked to be misrepresented before a crowd of boys. His pulse suddenly rose. An impulse of anger almost choked him and for a moment made his eyes burn and his sight become dim. Of course what he did was all wrong, but where is the manly man or womanly woman who is going to blame him overmuch for what took place. No boy will, and I doubt if any girl will.

We know that for a boy eight years old Tom had a pretty strong right arm. He had strengthened it well by pitching. It had good staying

qualities. In the gymnasium at the Sisters' school he could raise himself by his arms so as to touch his chin to the horizontal bar.

Tom's anger rose from another reason, too. His statement ending with "as the catechism teaches" put him in, not exactly a false position, but at least in a peculiar one, and for this reason.

It had leaked out among the boys — and the rumor had been confirmed by the peculiar costume in which he had appeared at the game the day before — that he had jumped out of the window and had run away to play that game. The boys did not know of his subsequent change of sentiment. How should they be expected to know? Tom saw that without their knowing this his talk about the precepts of the catechism would sound very strange coming from him.

Notwithstanding, when one is angry, that he may be actuated by very good intentions, he is not very likely to do the most correct thing at the critical moment. The reader will not, therefore, be extremely surprised at Tom Losely's subsequent actions.

"You are a nice kid to preach about obedience and what the catechism tells us," said the big boy.

"I'll talk about what I like," said Tom.

"Will you?"

"Yes, I will."

“No, you won’t — to me.”

“Yes, I will.”

“No, you won’t. I don’t want to hear from one who steals —”

“You’re a liar. I never stole in my life.”

“Yes, you did. You stole out of your bedroom window yesterday afternoon.”

“You’re a —,” but Tom checked himself. He knew that he was honest as the sun with regard to taking what did not belong to him. Yet at the moment he was so beclouded in his mind that, boy-like, he could not distinguish between thieving and “stealing out” of a room when told to remain. With equal consistency Tom might have charged the big boy with theft for having stolen a base in the game the preceding afternoon.

“Look here, fellows; here’s Losely preaching things to us, and doing things yesterday which any of us wouldn’t think of doing, would we?”

A shout of assent rose from the lips of more than half the crowd present. For a moment Tom hung his head in shame. Bitterly he now regretted his action of yesterday. At that moment he would have given worlds to be able to deny the insinuation. Stung by the remarks of the coarse, big fellow, at least four years older than himself, he recriminated.

“Talk about stealing, I guess Mrs. Green, at

the corner grocery could tell something about you and her watermelons if she wanted to."

Stupid Tom! Two wrongs do not make a right. You who talked about the catechism and its teaching knew, or ought to have known, that you had no right to make known the sin of others.

One word led to another, and from angry words came something worse.

We draw a veil over what followed, merely remarking that Tom's father and mother both declared that if the black eye did not assume its normal color, or Master Tom's upper lip assume its normal size by next Saturday night, they could not disgrace themselves by taking such a looking boy with them for the two weeks' vacation on his uncle's farm.

Tom had a good deal of provocation, so we will not blame him — too much, yet he is not to be excused altogether.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW IT FARED WITH TOM

“OH, TOMMY! how did you come for to do it?” said Jane the next morning when she saw how badly disfigured the boy’s face really was. “I’m just awful afraid your ma won’t let you go into the country, that I am.”

Tom simply groaned, not from pain, but on account of the dubious outlook.

“Your mother’s got a letter,” continued the girl, “from your sister, and she says she and Gerald and Leonard are having the awfulest good time at your uncle’s. It’ll be a great pity if you can’t go, won’t it?”

Young Losely’s lip looked as if it had been stung by a bee. Under his right eye there was a tell-tale mark. He did not mind the swelling of the lip. He knew that would go down in twenty-four hours. His anxiety was about his right eye.

“Can’t you do something for it, Jane? You know how clever you are always.”

The conference was taking place in the wood-shed.

“Bless the boy! You think I’m a doctor as well as everything. You shouldn’t just go and get into them scrimmages with them rough boys — that’s all. Now you’ve got to take the consequences.”

“I’m sure you can do something, Jane, if you want to, you’re so clever — but then nobody cares for just a troublesome boy. I may as well be dead and out of the way, and then I wouldn’t be any more trouble to anybody.”

Master Tommy put on the injured, innocent look and pose which he had so often used successfully with the cook. This time it was a failure. Jane burst into a hearty laugh, her arms akimbo, while her hands held her rather fat sides.

“Oh! oh! you’re a nice-looking invalid, you are. You look as if you were going to pine away and die for sure, you do.”

And she laughed again. As she took another survey of her pet she saw, instead of a boy that was likely to sink into a premature grave, a very healthy, hearty, pleasant-looking face, the very picture of health and boyish roguishness. True, the merry twinkle in one eye was somewhat impeded by the swelling and the blackness. But the other did duty for both. With the utmost stretch of imagination she could not associate

Master Thomas Losely's looks with consumption, or a rapid decline, or an early grave.

Jane, as we have before remarked, was a bit of a tease. She liked to banter Tom for a while, and then pet him and feed him. Tom remembered how she had cried when he had the whooping cough and she thought he was going to die.

“Well, Jane dear, I don’t exactly wish I was dead. Father Fowler says that’s wicked. But you needn’t laugh at a fellow so when he’s in trouble. You don’t know what it is to lose two weeks in the country all because of a beastly black eye.”

“Don’t I?”

“Do you, Jane? Did you ever have a black eye?”

“I didn’t say I did. But I know what it is to be disappointed. Well, well, don’t worry about it. I’ll get a bit of raw beef from the ice-box and we’ll see what we can do. I’ll call you when I am ready for you.”

Jane was as good as her word. In half an hour she called Tom from his favorite summer-house, placed a layer of beef on the eye, and bound it up with a large white handkerchief.

“There! you keep that on till dinner-time, and it will be much improved.”

“Oh, bother!” said ungrateful Tom, “now I

can't read. I and Fred are reading 'Claude Lightfoot' down in the grape arbor."

"Well, you silly boy, can't you get Fred Thorncroft to read to you?"

"Never thought of that, Jane dear. I am awfully obliged to you, you are always so kind. Don't you think, Jane, that if Fred reads to me very long, some of those sweet cookies would be good for him — he is rather thin, you know."

"You young rascal! Get along out o' this. You worry the life out of me."

"Oh! Jane —"

"Get along, I say. You two youngsters are more trouble —"

"But, Jane dear."

"But, Jane dear! Oh! yes. I know what that means. Well, clear off now, and in half an hour I'll see what I can find for both of you. Mind now, you are not to come bothering here. I'll be down the garden with what I can find."

With this Tom had to be content, and if the truth be told, he was quite content, for Jane never failed of her promises. Fred laughed heartily when he saw the big bandage round his companion's head.

"My! but wouldn't Big Bully be glad to see you now."

"I wouldn't care if he did. Say, Fred, do you think I did wrong to fight him yesterday?"

Fred Thorncroft did not answer at once. He was trying to think it all out — trying to put himself in Tom's place. What would he have done in the same circumstances? After quite mature consideration for one so young, he decided in the negative.

“I do not think, Tom, you did the right thing.”

“Why not, Fred?”

“Because it's wrong to fight, isn't it?”

“Yes, but —”

“There's no but. He made you angry —”

“I guess he did,” said Tom indignantly.

“Well, you made him just as mad. Didn't you say a mean thing about him and that water-melon?”

“Wasn't it true, though?” asked Tom in self-defence.

“It may be true, but you should not have said anything about it.”

“Well, he struck me first.”

“Because you were not quick enough. There's no difference between you as far as that goes; and it didn't look well, Tom, to be fighting after you repeated those words about obedience to parents, from the catechism.”

“I guess that's what made him so angry.”

“What?”

“He thought I was putting myself up as better than he was.”

“I believe the real cause was because you would not play in that game on Thursday.”

“Well, I am sorry for it all.”

“But most of all for the black eye, eh?”

“It isn’t as nice as candy, sure. Say, Fred, wonder what Father Fowler would say if he saw me now!

“Hope he won’t find it out,” continued Tom; “if he does, I’m afraid — oh! here’s Jane!”

Tom immediately forgot all about Father Fowler and the terrible consequences that might ensue if he discovered anything. Jane was the all-important personage just now.

“How is the black eye, Tommy?” she asked.

“I don’t know. It feels funny.”

“What does that mean? No, you don’t! You keep that handkerchief on until noon; then I’ll put another piece of meat on your eye for the afternoon.”

“Oh, bother! Jane, I don’t want —”

“All right, sir, if you don’t want to be cured you will not be able to go Sunday, that’s all.”

“Fred’s awful hungry, Jane; I know he is.”

“Oh! you know a lot, you do. I expect it’s six for him and sixteen for yourself. I can’t see why it is boys is always so ter’ble hungry. They has never done eatin’, I do declare.”

Notwithstanding her scolding, the kind-hearted creature had brought the boys quite a substan-

tial lunch, which she placed on the little rustic table, scolding and laughing at the same time.

“There! now. If you two boys get away with that I guess you will be able to last till dinner-time at least.”

She stood aside to witness for a moment the effect her kindness had upon the two boys. Didn’t their eyes glisten — at least one of Tom’s and both of Fred’s — at the dainty little lunch! By way of complement to the feast she drew from her ample pocket two bottles of pop — that is, soda-water — as a very special treat.

All of which goes to show, once more, that Jane was in a fair way of completely spoiling these two boys by kindness. Well, not altogether, as we shall see before this chronicle of Tom closes. Jane could “put her foot down” to some purpose when it became necessary. Once it did become necessary, and Tom remembered it for many a day after. But this was some time after the celebrated visit to the country. The story is, however, quite good enough to keep. We are interested in the fortunes of Tom just now.

CHAPTER IX.

SATURDAY

THE last day of the week was an anxious one for Tom. The discoloration of the eye was not completely gone. Twenty times that day he had asked his mother:

“Will I be allowed to go, mamma?”

And as many times she had answered:

“It is not settled yet. You must ask your father this evening. He will tell you whether he will take you or not.”

“Oh! mamma, do you think he will say no?”

“I am sure I can not say.”

That was all the satisfaction he could get. One thing gave him hope. The blackness of the eye had by this time turned to a dingy yellow. This color, bad enough in itself, was not so conspicuous as the black, and so Tom had great hopes.

A dozen times that afternoon he had run across the alley into Fred's garden, to consult with him over the prospects. Both were in extreme doubt.

They were in reality in greater danger than they knew of losing their vacation, for Dr. Losely

himself was very uncertain whether he could get away from his practice even for one day. There appeared to be an unusual amount of sickness in the city. In addition to many other cases, he was particularly interested in one of a country priest who was lying ill at the Sisters' hospital. In connection with this incident a very curious thing happened to bother Tom, and will be related later.

The doctor intended when he went to the country, to spend half a week with his brother. For a busy physician with a large practice this necessitated a great deal of arranging so that his patients should not suffer from lack of medical attention during his absence. Medicine, like the ministry, requires a large amount of self-denial, as Dr. Losely had often found to his severe cost. He finally successfully arranged with other physicians that all his patients should be attended to by them for three days.

He did not come home on that Saturday evening until it was quite late. Tom was allowed to stay up much longer than usual to learn his fate. Fred Thorncroft had begged the same privilege. He was allowed to come over to Tom's house and remain until the doctor came and they had learned whether they were to go or remain at home.

The two boys were looking at a picture-book,

with their heads close together, when the doctor at last entered the room.

"Oh! papa, may I go to-morrow?" asked Tom, jumping to his feet. "See, my eye is all right, isn't it, papa?"

"I don't know yet, child. I must consult mamma first."

The faces of the two boys were a study. Fred Thorncroft did not want to appear too anxious. Tommy was less restrained. He was of a more impulsive nature, and his open mouth and questioning eyes plainly told his desires.

It has been already remarked that Tom was a bit of a politician. Hearing that his mother had the deciding vote, as it were, on the all-absorbing question, he sidled up to her chair, and laying his head on her shoulder, said:

"Mamma dear, you will let me go, won't you, dear, because —"

He did not know exactly what to say.

—"Because, because you are going, and I don't want to be away from you, do I, ma?"

Mrs. Losely gave a knowing smile.

"Is that the only reason, Tom?" she asked.

"No, ma, course it isn't."

"Do you think it the chief reason? If I were to decide not to go out to Uncle William's, but to wait for your big brother William to come

home from the medical college, do you think you would care to go without me?"

Tom's father watched his face with an amused smile. He knew his boy was truthful, and he was interested to see how he would answer a really hard question. Tom made no reply for some moments.

"Well, Tommy, what do you think of my question?" at length asked his mother.

"I think brother William would like best to come out to you at Uncle William's, mamma."

Dr. Losely burst out into a hearty laugh, in which his wife joined.

"You ought," he said, "to enter the diplomatic service, Tom. You are a regular Metternich." All of which was Greek to Tom.

"I don't know what that means, pa," said the boy, and then with a certain wistfulness, with just a touch of pathos in it, he said:

"I, and Fred too — we do so want to go."

"That's honest, at all events," said his father.

"And would you be willing to go without me?" asked his mother.

"Ye-es, ma, if you say I may."

Thomas Losely, incipient diplomat, saw that it was best to be plain about the matter.

"But, papa," said Mrs. Losely to her husband, "do you think Master Tom's eye is in such a condition that he may travel safely?"

Mr. Losely scarcely refrained from bursting out again into laughter. To imagine danger, and to Tom of all boys in the world, just because he had a black eye!

Mrs. Losely continued:

“And do you not think, papa, if we took a boy with us who has such a disgraceful black eye, we should be disgraced?”

“Tain’t black no more,” said Tom, in his eagerness forgetting what grammar he knew.

“See, it’s yellow now.”

“You must thank Jane for that,” said his mother. It was getting very late, and in spite of Tom’s anxiety to know the decision of his parents he had difficulty in keeping his eyes open. It was a case of “tired eyelids upon tired eyes.” Small boys are children of the sun. They can not live long awake in the darkness or in artificial light.

“Go back to your picture-book,” said the doctor. “Your mother and I will consult over the matter.”

Tom was on the point of blurting out, as usual when displeased, an “Oh, bother!” but he realized how critical the time was, both for him and for Fred Thorncroft, and luckily restrained himself in time.

The father and mother consulted in whispers for a moment or two, during which time he in-

formed her of the arrangements he had made to be away from his practice until Wednesday morning.

“That’s delightful! I am so glad!” In her pleasure she had spoken aloud. Tom’s ears were on the alert.

“Hooray!” shouted Tom unceremoniously, taking her expression of pleasure as a favorable verdict for himself and Fred Thorncroft.

“Why are we favored with such a demonstration, Thomas?” asked his father.

“Didn’t mamma say ‘That’s delightful!’ papa? Don’t that mean that Fred and I are to go?”

“Indeed it meant no such thing, but if you promise to behave when you are out at your uncle’s, and not to break any limbs, personal or of trees, nor frighten the ducks and geese, nor get another black eye, I think you and Fred may come along. Fred, do you think you could get up early enough for a five o’clock Mass to-morrow? We start at half past seven from the Union Depot.”

“Yes, sir,” said the delighted Fred. “James, our stable man, is always up by that time on Sundays. He goes to that Mass always. I’ll get him to wake me. Thank you, sir.”

“Good night, my boy. Get to bed as soon as you can. You will need all the sleep you can get.

The dust-man has been in your eyes hours ago."

Fred was wide awake at this moment, and so was Tom. You would not have doubted it had you heard the noise the two made as they ran down-stairs in glee. Such shaking of hands! Such punching each other for joy! Well, they acted just like any other two boys in any part of the world would act upon receiving such good news after a period of anxious uncertainty.

CHAPTER X.

THE WAGON RIDE

UNCLE WILLIAM'S farm was an ideal place for city boys to spend an ideal vacation. The house was large and rambling, with any number of barns and stables and outhouses, the use or purpose of which neither Tom nor Fred could divine. At a glance, however, in true boy fashion, they realized what famous places they all would be for playing "hi spy" and "hide and seek," where a boy could hide "real," and would have to be hunted for in earnest. It was all delightful.

Then the green fields! how wonderfully green they were! Were there ever such meadows? and the little lake, and a real boat on it!

The farm was on a rich rolling upland, well kept, and with an air of peace and plenty everywhere. Both from front door and kitchen door one could look over an undulating country for many miles. The heat of the summer was constantly tempered by invigorating breezes that swept over the uplands.

When Tom and his party visited the farm it

was a little too early for autumn fruits and too late for the early summer strawberries. Owing to this circumstance Tom was saved from numerous sudden sicknesses, the nature of which every boy will understand. Nevertheless both boys, you may be sure, found plenty to interest them. Tom had to be careful to keep those numerous promises he had made to his father about broken limbs and black eyes and other things.

Before we get to the farm, however, we have to narrate an event in which Master Tom figured somewhat conspicuously. Just as the train was slowing up at the country station, Tom was looking out of the car window. He saw across a field a company of gypsies, among whom were two women with very conspicuous red and blue dresses, strange-looking turbans on their heads, and large gold rings in their ears. Near them a young man held the chain of a tame brown bear.

Now, of all things in the world that had a fascination for Master Tom Losely it was a bear. He certainly would have started off alone in the direction of the gypsies as soon as the train had come to a standstill had not so many other things attracted his attention just then. He kept his own counsel, determined to keep his eyes open on his way to the farm. Something might happen.

The farm lay about three miles from the depot, and Dr. Losely's brother William had brought his wife with him in the family carriage to meet the town folks on their arrival at the station. A family carriage would not conveniently hold more than four grown persons, so Uncle William had fitted up a hay-wagon with seats and blankets, and had brought Esther and Gerald and Leonard to meet their brother Tom and his friend Fred. In the wagon were also several cousins of Tom, many of whom he had never seen. His sister and two younger brothers, who had been sent out to the farm quite early in the summer, were all as brown as berries from their constant outdoor life. Brothers, sister, and cousins, all red and rosy, formed as merry a party of children as ever rode on a hay-rack. It is said that a wagon-load of monkeys is the most mischievous thing in creation. If that be so, it is also certain that a hay-rack load of healthy, lively, happy children is the noisiest and jolliest thing in creation. Didn't these children sing and shout and chatter! Was there ever such fun as they had during that ride?

"Take good care of the children, George," said Farmer Losely, as he started for home with the older folks; "dinner will be ready by the time you reach home."

"All right, sir; I'll look after them. Shall I whip any of them if they are bad?"

"Yes, yes; give them a good cowhiding when they deserve it," said Uncle William, with a hearty laugh good to hear, as he whipped up the carriage horses.

"You hear, children, what the boss says," said George, the farm-hand. "I'm to use the raw-hide, and my! it hurts."

For answer to his dire threat Tom was surprised to see his brother Leonard snuggle up under the left arm of George, while Esther quite cosily took the seat at his right, and seemed pleased to occupy the coveted place in front.

George Wood was only a hired man, yet there was good reason for the children to love him. He was the son of a small farmer in the neighborhood and had hired himself to Farmer Losely to help pay off the mortgage on his father's farm. Clean of limb and in habit, well built, strong and muscular from a life of healthful outdoor exercise, George possessed one of those remarkably clear complexions which, with all her beauty-sleeps, a lady of fashion could never hope to attain, although she would give half a fortune to possess it. His was a clear skin with the faintest natural blush on his cheeks; he had the whitest of laughing teeth, which tobacco smoke had never soiled.

His eyes were a dark blue, making a fine contrast to his rich brown hair.

George's employer knew his worth on the farm, and the farmer's wife was not slow to recognize what a treasure they possessed with regard to the children. When they were with him her mind was at rest. He was like the sunshine, always smiling at his task. He had the secret of success, for he labored to have the work done and not to have the hours pass.

He would tell the children stories by the dozen, sing songs for them, make whistles from willow sticks, catch rabbits for them, take them fishing and bait their hooks, and all was done so merrily and so cheerily that it was a pleasure to be in his company.

Such characters, who seem to possess the secret of life, are scarce, but occasionally one is to be found here or there; and when Mr. Losely found this one he was loth to let him go at any price.

“Now, if you are good children, I will tell you a story as we ride home.”

All promised to be “ever so good,” and he straightway began to tell them about a wonderful house that a certain wonderful individual named Jack had built, and of a wonderful cow with a crumpled horn, and a wonderful cat, and a wonderful rat, and a milkmaid, and many other wonderful people and wonderful events.

The children listened quietly. They were much interested in George's unique versions of the famous old nursery-rhymes of our childhood days.

The hay-wagon had arrived within a quarter of a mile from the house when, thinking that Tom was wonderfully quiet, the hired man looked around to see whether all his party were safe. Fred Thorncroft, as soon as the driver began to tell stories, had secured a seat next to him, Leonard reluctantly making room for him. To George's surprise, he discovered that Master Thomas Losely was missing.

"Where's your brother Tom, Gerald?" he asked of the younger boy.

Gerald looked around and was surprised that his brother was not there. While all had been intent on listening to George's stories, and had crowded to the front part of the wagon, Tom Losely had quietly dropped off the rear.

The driver became very anxious. He questioned the children closely when they had last seen Master Tom on the wagon. All had been so interested in his story-telling that no one seemed to remember much about Tom after he had tumbled into the wagon with the rest at the station.

George was undecided what to do. He did not know whether to turn the horses and go back in

search of the missing boy, or, being so near his destination, to drive up to the farmhouse and inform the boy's father and uncle of the disappearance. He decided to do the latter.

Telling the children to hold tight and not fall out, he whipped the horses into a good run, arriving at the barn just as Mr. William Losely was leading the carriage team to the stable.

There was great consternation when the news was told. Dr. Losely decided to re-enter the carriage, and with George, who knew all the country roads quite well, to go in search of his missing son.

“Is there any water in the neighborhood?” he asked of the hired man.

“None except our own pond nearer than Pike Lake, sir. That is more than five miles away.”

“Isn’t it strange that you couldn’t drive home a number of children without losing one of them?” asked the doctor, somewhat harshly.

“No, sir,” said George, in an open, manly way, that at once took with the doctor; “children in the country are in the habit of taking care of themselves. I did not think it necessary to watch so big a boy as your son Tom.”

“You are quite right. Forgive me. I am a little worried about the rascal. I suppose it is one of Master Tom’s usual pranks. I guess I

will have to borrow a strap from you when we get him home."

"He's safe, surely, somewhere," said George. "If we do not find him he may have to spend a night in the woods. That's the worst that will happen him, that's sure."

"You are a good boy," said the doctor. "I thank you. That reminds me: it would be a good thing to say a prayer to St. Anthony. Are you a Catholic?"

"Why, sure!"

The ring of triumph in the tone was true and the look of pride in the young man's face was good to see. It accounted for much of that charm which he possessed over young children. It told of goodness of heart and a clean life. God bless such young fellows. They are as pleasant to meet with as sunshine after rain.

Both blessed themselves and said the Hail Mary three times in honor of St. Anthony.

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE WAS TOM?

THE dinner hour came and passed with no sign of the missing boy. The two searchers hunted up and down every crossroad. One or the other made incursions into the forest, but there was no sign of Tom.

By three o'clock Dr. Losely returned home. When he arrived, Esther was in tears, and Gerald and Leonard were sitting on the front porch very solemn and quiet.

"Any news, papa? Did you find Tommy?" asked Esther.

"No, I have not. We can not get any trace of him."

"That's the strangest thing I ever heard of in all my life, John," said Dr. Losely's brother.

"Very strange, indeed," replied the doctor.

"My goodness!" continued the farmer, "to think that a youngster can be lost from ten o'clock until near five — see, it's that now — in this part of the country, where everybody knows everybody. Why, it's wonderful, I do declare!"

“What is the best thing to do?” asked Tom’s father.

“George, you go and get some dinner, and then go along the concession road and ask the neighbors to send help. We’ll make a search party.”

“I’ll go at once; the food can wait.”

“No, get your dinner first; you must be hungry.”

“Never mind that. At least I’ll run down to Willises’ and tell them to send word up and down the road.”

“Well, drive the carriage down there. A man can’t travel all day without food.”

The neighbors, good-hearted people, soon gathered. They thought it best at once to institute a search of the territory between the farm and the village. Having changed horses, Dr. Losely and George again took the carriage and helped in the search.

This time they took the road leading to the forest which covered the hillsides and stretched away for miles. By the time they had reached the edge of the woods the sun had sunk like a ball of fire to the rim of the horizon.

It was not long before the gloaming came. Suddenly, at about a quarter of a mile away, along the winding forest road they saw blue

smoke curling up and dissipating itself among the darkening foliage.

Tying their horses to a tree, they approached cautiously. At a bend in the road they came, without warning, upon a camp of gypsies who were preparing their evening meal.

As soon as the gypsies were conscious that they had been perceived, one of the band set up a peculiarly low, mournful, whistling sound, which was immediately answered by some one farther away.

Dr. Losely walked into the middle of the camp. He at once stated his errand.

“I have lost my son since eleven o’clock this morning. Do you know anything of him?”

There was no response. The six or seven men around the camp-fire continued stolidly smoking, while the two women in red and blue dresses attended to the fire and a large kettle swung above it.

“I need hardly say,” continued the physician, “that you will be well paid if I find you have taken care of him, and he is unhurt.”

“What would we want with your boy?” said one of the men. “You are a city man. No boy of yours would be any good to us.”

Dr. Losely was not of the same opinion, especially as the papers had, just at this time, a good

deal about kidnaping and ransoming rich men's sons.

"But have you seen him?" he asked.

"I didn't say I had," continued the burly horse-trader. "How old is he?"

"Eight years, and stout for his age."

"No, we haven't seen anything of him, have we, men?" said the spokesman of the group, appealing to the others, who gave a sort of non-committal growl.

Dr. Losely, from their manner, felt sure that they knew more than they cared to tell.

"Look here, men," he said, "my boy, as you say, would be of no service to you; but if he is here, I'll pay you well for your trouble, and take him home."

"I didn't say we had seen anything of him, or anything like it; but what would you be willing to pay now, if one of us men took up the search for you and found the kid?"

"I'll pay you well. Fifty dollars to every one who joins in the search, and a hundred to the one who finds him. Will you help me?"

The gypsies consulted together for a moment, the women nodding their heads vigorously at them to induce them to accept the offer. No answer, however, was given, for just at that moment a wild halloo sounded through the woods. The shout was answered by others not far off.

“Hurrah! hurrah! boys; we’ve found him asleep in the woods.”

The father’s heart bounded with joy. He deliberately made the sign of the cross.

The men around the camp-fire were greatly confused and not a little frightened. They were eight, and there were two women. Two men only were standing before them. From the sounds which came from the woods in two different directions and were being answered from farther and farther away, the gypsies did not know how many men would soon be upon them. If they showed fight they might get the worst of it.

Frank Willis came down the mountain path, bearing in his arms Master Tom Losely.

Our hero presented a sorry appearance. His face was scratched and bleeding, his clothes were sadly torn — and it was his Sunday suit, too — his big yoke collar had become half unbuttoned and was sadly bedraggled. He rested his head on Willis’s shoulder, as if he were utterly tired out and exhausted.

By this time four more of the searchers had joined the doctor. They were, consequently, six, or five if one were necessary to look after the safety of the boy, should there be any attempt to punish the gypsies for kidnaping.

Five to eight and two women would be a

rather unequal contest, as Mr. Losely saw, although he felt very much inclined to punish those who he felt sure had attempted to steal his child.

“Tommy, my boy, how came you here in the gypsies’ camp? Speak, lad; don’t be afraid.”

“I ain’t afraid, papa; but oh! I’m so tired. Let me sleep.”

“No, no; wait a minute. Tell me how you came here.”

“I jumped out of the hay-wagon without George’s knowing, because I saw a bear over near the woods. I wanted to go up to it.”

“What then?”

“As soon as the bear saw me it got up and ran away. It was a funny bear, papa, ’cause it dragged a long chain after it. I ran after it, and, papa, it went through a big berry-patch, and I was scratched awful and I bleded more’n I did when that fellow hit me on the lip in the vacant lots.”

“What happened then? How did you get here?”

“Oh! I don’t know. I sat down on a tree to rest, and then an old woman — there! there she is —” and Tom pointed to one of the women at the cauldron who strongly resembled one of Macbeth’s witches —“there she is, papa. She gave me a drink and then I got sleepy, and my head went round and round, and the trees began

to dance around, too, and I laughed and shouted, and then I was put down on a green bank, and that's all I know. I'm so tired, and hungry too, papa!"

Dr. Losely looked at his watch, which he closed with an angry click.

"You, you — people, were not content with keeping my son, but you have kept him from eleven in the morning until now — nine o'clock — without food."

"He's been sleeping all the time," said one of the men.

"Drugged, I suppose. Look at him now. Bring the boy here, Willis."

Tom's father put his face close to the boy's mouth and smelled his breath. Tom's head had sunk on Willis's shoulder and he was again fast asleep. The doctor turned to the gypsies and said, sternly:

"If you don't put twenty miles between this place and you before sunrise I will have every one of you arrested. I mean what I say."

The itinerant horse-traders knew that he meant it, too, and began at once to pack up their chattels and untether their trading-horses.

Thus Master Tom Losely had quite a strange adventure on his first day in the country. On his return home we may be sure he did not fail duly to impress Jane with the important part he had played in it.

CHAPTER XII.

OUT EARLY

EVEN a dose of the sleeping-draught is not a thing to keep the average boy in bed long after sunrise when on his summer vacation. When Mr. Thomas Losely arose he felt just a little shaky on his legs for a minute or two, but after he had taken his usual matutinal sponge bath he was the same lively and mischievous lad as ever.

It was not many minutes after his eyes were open that he was out on an exploring expedition, looking at the barns, stables, pens, garden, orchard — everything, and, as we may well suppose, forming his plans for his day's campaign. Peering into the dark barn through the little side door, he espied George hard at work. George saw him.

“Hello, gypsy!”

“Good morning, George,” said Tom.

“Good morning; come in.”

Tom stepped into the barn's large floor-space.

“How do you feel this morning?”

“Hungry,” was the boy's laconic reply. It

was truthful, nevertheless — Jane or his mother would have been willing to vouch for that.

“ You are up early,” said George.

“ I ain’t, neither,” replied Tom.

“ Do you know what the time is?”

“ Near breakfast-time, I hope,” said the little man, feeling his stomach sympathetically.

The children’s friend burst out laughing.

“ You will have to wait nearly two hours for that. It’s only a little after five o’clock.”

“ My!” said Tom, in dismay, “ I’m sorry I got up so early.”

“ I am going to milk the cows directly. I’ll get you some bread from the kitchen and give you a drink of fresh warm milk. Do you think that will last you till breakfast-time?”

“ Oh! George, you’re a — duck!”

“ That’s better than being a goose, at all events, eh?”

“ Hello, Fred; you up, too?” said Tom, as his companion appeared at the small door of the barn. Fred, who had slept at the other end of the large room, had been aroused by Tom’s splashing himself and his ohs! and ahs! and his puffings and blowings. Once awake, he had thought it better to get up.

“ Tom, Tom Losely,” said Fred, seriously, “ have you forgotten anything this morning?”

The boy addressed felt all over his linen suit,

which his mother had put out for him so that he would see it on awaking; looked at his shoes, felt of his necktie, and looked puzzled. He then felt for his handkerchief in his pocket and discovered that it was not there.

"I guess my han-ke-chief is up-stairs," he said.

"I don't mean that; something more important," said Thorncroft.

Tom thought a moment.

"Oh! I know! My jack-knife and my top and marbles are in my Sunday clothes. I'll get them after breakfast."

"Something more important than these things, Tom."

"No, Fred; I ain't got nothing more important'n these things."

"Say, Tom."

"Yes?"

"Didn't you jump up in a hurry, and you were out of doors almost as soon as you were dressed?"

"Sure."

"And didn't you forget to kneel down and say your morning prayers?"

Tom blushed. This is exactly what had happened, although, to do him justice, it was very unusual.

George, who all this time had remained a quiet

observer of the dialogue, now took the little fellow's hand gently.

"Is that so?"

"Yes," came from Tom in almost a whisper.

"Is that right, Tom?"

"No, it ain't."

"Well, then," asked George, "what are you going to do?"

"Say 'em now," and Tom turned to go to the house.

"You need not go indoors, Tom. Don't you think the good Lord will hear you as well in a barn as in your room?"

"All right," said Tom, and he at once knelt down in a corner of the barn floor and recited his morning devotions.

George waited, cap in hand, until he had finished and had blessed himself.

"Tom?"

"Yes?"

"I noticed you forgot one prayer."

"Which was that?"

"You didn't ask your guardian angel to take care of you to-day."

"Um! um! I forgot," and he knelt down again and recited:

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom His love commits me here,

Ever this day be at my side,
To guard, enlighten, rule and guide.

George Wood must have had a kind of fore-knowledge of the day's happenings, for surely, if we may reverently so speak, Tom's guardian angel never had a harder day's work than to keep his little charge from all harm on that celebrated Monday.

Before nine Tom had nearly broken his neck; before ten he had narrowly escaped breaking a leg; and before dinner — but we will wait. These escapades have to be related more fully when the time comes.

Of course at breakfast that morning there was nothing talked of but the boy's strange adventure of the day before. His cousin Ernest, about Tom's own age, seems to have almost worshipped our young hero, and was never done talking about the adventure. Fred Thorncroft, too, made the most of it. He had pleasant visions of the wonderful tales he would tell the Invincibles and the Unconquerables and Digger and the others when he got home. He had one regret, which was that he himself had not been the hero instead of his friend Tom Losely.

But that first breakfast! Didn't the three boys' eyes — and Gerald's and Leonard's too, for that matter — fairly bulge when Aunt Ellen brought

in a big dish piled mountain-high with buckwheat cakes! And oh! that unlimited supply of maple syrup! It was in no little glass jug with a silver top, as at home, but was brought in in a large pitcher which seemed to say as plainly as pitchers could talk: "Help yourselves plentifully, boys; there's more where this came from. You need not be afraid of the cry 'Be careful with the syrup, children' in this house."

"Tommy, tell us all you remember of yesterday's happenings," said his father, as soon as the first onslaught on the buckwheat cakes had subsided, and while they were waiting for another supply which Aunt Ellen had gone out to the kitchen to bring in.

"I don't seem to remember much, papa. I slipped off the wagon while George was singing a song, and Esther and Gerald and Lenny and all my cousins were laughing at it. I was afraid they would see me and stop the wagon, so I hid behind some bushes on the roadside. When the wagon was out of sight I turned up a road where I thought I should find the people with the bear I had seen from the window of the train. When I found them, the bear was lying in the dust in the middle of the road, and a man with a short coat and a funny red hat was leaning on the bank. He was not holding the chain,"

“Were you not afraid of the bear?” asked Fred Thorncroft.

Truthful Tom hesitated a moment before answering. Till the present moment he had never thought about it. He really did not know whether he was afraid or not. He was fascinated by the tame bear and followed it without thinking of any possible danger.

“The bear, seeing it was free, began to run, and then I followed it through the brambles, and that’s where I scratched my face — but it ain’t another black eye, papa.”

“So I see,” said his father; “you are excellent in keeping to the letter of the law. But go on with your story.”

“Well, when I sat down on the side of the road to rest and saw the old woman in a red dress come to me, with a tin cup in her hand, then I began to be afraid, and wished I was home with mamma. My! she was awful ugly, and she looked like this, didn’t she, papa?”

Master Tom tried to pucker up his lips, wrinkle his face, and make himself cross-eyed. Instead of representing in the least a haggard old woman’s face, he only succeeded in making himself look extremely comical. Everybody laughed heartily at his efforts.

“I thought she was bringing me a cup of cold water from the spring across the road, but when

I tasted it, it was awful hot. It looked like water, so I didn't know."

"Well, you are a lucky boy to be sitting here eating pancakes this morning," said his father.

"Yes, sir."

Tom did not know whether this was mere comment, or reprimand.

"You might have been stolen for good, and never have seen us any more."

"Yes, sir."

"Now to-day, take care you do not get into any more mischief."

"Yes, sir. My guardian ang —"

"What's that?" asked his father sharply. He thought he detected a species of levity in Tom's manner. Tom went on unconscious of the sharpness of his father's tone.

"My guardian angel is going to take care of me all day. I asked him in the barn."

"In the barn! What do you mean, child?" said his mother.

Tom blushed once again, as he had done before that morning. However, he told his fault out manfully.

"I forgot to say my morning prayers when I got up, and Fred came out and reminded me, and I told him and George I had forgotten. Then George made me kneel down on the barn floor and say them, and made me pray 'special to my

angel to keep me safe all day. He said he guessed my angel would have lots of work to-day."

"Oh, Tom! how can you talk like that?" said Ethel, reprovingly.

"What's wrong, Ethel? I guess it's true, isn't it?"

"But weren't you afraid, Tom, he would eat you up?" asked Fred.

"My angel?"

"No, the bear." Fred's mind was still running on the bear incident.

"'Fraid of the bear. No. Sure, I'd seen bears before. I was more afraid of the people. When he got up out of the dust I went up to him and he began to run away. The man kept saying, 'Yi, yi, yi, yi, yi,'—like that—and beat a little drum. I think he wanted the bear to dance for me. But the bear began to run along the road. It was great fun. I tried to catch up, and then the silly old bear went into the raspberry patch, and that's where I got so scratched."

At this point Tom's voice had such a lugubrious tone in it that all burst out laughing.

"And that's where you spoiled your Sunday clothes," remarked his mother.

"Never mind, ma dear, when I get big I'll buy some more," said Tom.

“He’ll wear his torn ones back into the city. It will be a lesson for him and teach him not to run after dancing bears,” said his father.

Nevertheless, before Tom finished his vacation a package addressed to him was brought by a certain person in whom Tom was particularly interested. The package contained a new, tight-fitting suit of black, some upright collars, and a neat tie. Master Losely actually shouted when he saw the collars. At last he had done with the large yoke collars — that bane of lively boys — forever.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOM'S FIRST DAY

NO SOONER was breakfast finished than Tom, Fred, and Ernest made for the big barn. It was a great structure with a lean-to horse stable at one end. Of course the city boys had to explore the great mows. The one opposite the stable end was filled high up with sheaves of golden wheat. It was a high climb for Tom Losely up the center ladder, and a by no means easy thing for him, when at the top, to swing himself to the inner side, but he succeeded at last. It was a strange experience for him to be high up under the roof, with wheat enough beneath his feet to feed him for a lifetime.

George had been told not to take the horses afield that day. His duty for the present lay in doing odd jobs of repairing and more especially of keeping an eye on the vivacious visitors, with special attention to be given to Master Tom.

There was no trouble about the girls. They would not require watching. Esther and her girl cousins had taken little Lenny out into the

rich pasture and adjoining woods. They were soon busy making daisy chains of the beautiful marguerites that grew in abundance there and filled the fields with stars.

Everything was new, strange, wonderful and delightful to the city boys.

"Hi, George," shouted Tom from his lofty position under the roof, "here's some eggs up here; lots of 'em."

"Glad to hear it. Bring them down."

"I can't. I am afraid of the old hen. She's awful spiteful. Shuh! shuh!"

And then followed a series of shrill shrieks. Tom had been attacked by the hen, and had learned from actual experience what it is to be "henpecked." George went laughing to his work in the stable.

We had better draw a veil over Tom's unsuccessful attempt to carry himself and a hatful of eggs down a perpendicular ladder. It wasn't a success. Kind Aunt Ellen had his linen suit washed and dried within an hour.

By nine o'clock Tom was up in the opposite mow, which was filled with new hay. This was delightful. Fred and he thought they had never smelled anything more delicious. They lay on it, and buried themselves in it.

But this did not long satisfy the eight-year-old activity of Tom. He mounted a large cross-

beam at the gable end of the barn and worked himself up to a point near the highest part of the roof. From there he let himself fall backward about ten feet into the soft, yielding hay. This was a new and delightful sensation. He induced Fred to try it. It had no fascination for the country boy, Ernest, yet he was glad his visitors could get amusement out of it.

Suddenly George, who was busy mending some harness in the stable, heard an unearthly yell from poor Tom, and saw one of the legs of that worthy projecting through the bars of an overhead hay-rack in one of the horse-stalls. The animal was frightened at the strange object, and backed and strained at its halter-strap, probably wondering what kind of diet boy's leg would be.

"Keep quite still, Tom. Don't move, or you will have your leg bitten off," said George, as he hurried from the stable floor and thence to the haymow.

Luckily for the madcap, the horse in that particular stall was the one used by Mrs. William Losely on her marketing expeditions because of its gentle disposition. It was lucky for Tom that he fell into the rack of that particular stall, for there were quite vicious horses on both sides, that would have delighted in a change of diet in the shape of a boy's leg for breakfast. Clinging

to a brace, George bent down and pulled Tom up from his perilous position.

“My! but you had a narrow escape that time,” said the farm-hand.

“ Didn’t know there was loose hay over the rack,” said Tom.

“ You know now, don’t you?”

“ Guess I do.”

“ Are you not glad you said the prayer to the guardian angel?”

“ Guess I am.”

“ Don’t you think it would be better to get down out of the haymow now?”

“ Dunno,” said Tom. “ ’Specks it would.”

“ Well, then, get on my back and I’ll carry you down the ladder.”

What fun that was for Tom, who was no weight for the stalwart young man.

“ Now run around the barn-yard and see what you can find to amuse you.”

The two boys started off, delighted with the turkeys and the guinea-hens with their peculiar calls. Tom soon had the calls down pat. The ducks, geese, chickens, and the great porkers all had interest for them for a while, but Tom had to be doing something. Mere looking at things would not satisfy him long.

“ Let’s hunt for eggs,” said Fred, nothing daunted by Tom’s past mishaps in that direction.

"All right, let's"—and the two boys were soon busy prying into every hole and corner. Presently Master Tom spied a nest with a hen sitting on it. Over the nest had been built a shelter of boughs.

"Guess that's a kind of queer hen—must be sort of boss," said young Losely.

"Let's see if she's got any eggs," suggested Fred Thorncroft.

"Shoo! shoo!" began Tom, without hesitation. "Oh, my! here's eighteen at least," as, amid a great fuss and noise, the hen went screaming and clucking away.

Carefully they put this find into Tom's hat. Carefully, oh, so carefully, he walked to the house with his treasure, determined, this time, not to require that his linen suit be washed again, at least before dinner-time.

"Look here, Fred Thorncroft," said Tom, when they were quite close to the house, "that egg is cracked. Ain't it funny it don't spill out like the others did this morning?"

Aunt Ellen heard them chattering outside the kitchen door. She opened it and asked them what they had found this time.

"Oh, Aunty! we haven't broken any this time," said Tom, in triumph. "One does seem to be cracked, but it don't spill out any."

"Where did you find them?" asked the boy's aunt, suspiciously.

"Down in the corner of the barn-yard, underneath a brush roof," answered Tommy.

The farmer's wife gave a look at the hatful and — gasped.

"Such boys I never did see in all my born days!"

"What's the matter, Aunty? They are nice eggs — all of 'em, 'cept the one that's cracked," said Master Tom.

"That's my special setting! I expected to have out a brood of young ducklings by next Saturday. You've gone and spoiled the whole hatching!"

To complicate matters, Tommy's mother appeared on the scene just at the inopportune moment — for Tom. Once more we must invoke the aid of the kindly curtain to hide from the reader what poor, innocent (of course) and much abused Tom suffered on this occasion. It was too bad. He meant well. But how should a city boy know the difference between a nest of eggs belonging to a setting hen and one not so belonging? How many city "grown-ups" could make the distinction?

CHAPTER XIV.

TOM WRITES A LETTER

ONLY half a day of Tom Losely's real vacation had been passed, and we already find him in durance vile. Well, the imprisonment in the house was not so bad, for it rained heavily on Monday afternoon. All the merry party of children had to find amusement indoorgs.

The city children were taken by their cousins up into the dark old attic of the large farmhouse. Here they found immense amusement in rifling old trunks and unearthing old-fashioned picture-books from among the rubbish that had been accumulating there for generations.

A book of fairy stories of the old style soon attracted the girls to one end of the attic where there was light enough to read. The boys did not care for such things just then, but continued to ransack the attic for treasures.

Suddenly Master Tom Losely was struck with an idea.

“ You, Fred, stay here with Ernest and Lenny. I've got to go and see mamma for a minute.”

Madcap clattered noisily down the attic stairs to his mother's room.

"What's the matter, Tom?" asked his mother in some little alarm.

"Oh! mamma, I've been here all this time and I haven't written to Jane to tell her how we are getting along."

"Very well. You may go down to the front parlor and ask your Aunt Ellen to give you a pen, ink, and some paper. Tell her you will be very careful to make no blots on the table-cloth."

"All right, mamma dear," and away he flew, earnestly intent on his new project. To the relief of his mother and Aunt Ellen, it kept him employed for an hour — under the circumstances something appreciated by the grown people. The result of his labors was the following epistle, which he requested his mother to mail that very night:

DEAR JANE:

I told you the day I plaid ball I would someday run away to join the Indgens. Well i nerely did only they was gipses. Papa searched ever so long for me among the gipse — i meen the indgens and found me sleepin' like the babes in the woods. i have maid up my mind i wont run off this summer, 'cause i am having so good a time at uncle Williams and Anty ellens, but when i come home if you dont treet me like a pore booy which is awefull hungry

i'm goin to do it sure nex time. i think i should like some of them there corn'd jamb tarts as soon as i get home. George is the nicesest feller you ever seen.

Nor more at pressint from your loving tommie."

About five o'clock the storm passed by. As Tom had been "as good as gold" all the afternoon, he was then allowed to go out with the other children. George was busy putting the feed for the night in the racks and the mangers. For some time he could give the children little attention.

He soon came out of the stable, carrying in his hand a long "gad," or flexible stick, which he used in place of a whip. He released all the horses and left the stable door open. The horses came out, one by one, to water.

Quietly every horse turned in the direction of the pond, or broadened stream, in the far corner of the home-pasture. The last horse to leave the stable was the "family horse," which had had so good an opportunity to make a meal off our young lad's leg, but had not the sense to avail himself of it. He was a quiet old animal with a kindly eye. George held him by a long halter-rope.

"Going to water the horses, Tom. Are you coming along?"

"Yes, sure. Can't I ride the brown horse?"

“Are you not afraid?”

“Naw! ’fraid of a horse! Who’s afraid?”

“Well, I heard a boy screaming pretty loud this morning when he got pretty close to one of them.”

“That’s ’cause I couldn’t get away. George, let me ride down to the pond — please.”

Very few people could withstand Tom’s coaxing. Certainly the good-natured George could not.

“But you’ll fall off.”

“No, I won’t; and if I do ’twon’t hurt.”

“Won’t it? Better not try. All right. Is your life insured?”

“What’s that?”

“A joke. Never mind. There are more than you who can not see a joke sometimes. Come here.”

George made a stirrup of his hand, telling Tom to spread his legs when he reached the horse’s back, and not to go too far and land on the ground on the other side.

“Now, then, yu-up!” and Tom Losely was for the first time on the back of a real live horse. How strange everything seemed, and how shaky and unstable!

The farm-hand led the horse carefully to water, but to Tom, mounted on high, it seemed as if the horse was running at a furious rate. It

was the funniest experience that Tom ever had — till then.

“ Better get off now,” said George, as they reached the water’s edge. “ Better get off, for fear of accidents.”

But the horse did not think so. It was a hot day and the poor animal was thirsty. Without waiting for the rider to dismount, the animal walked straight into the water up to its knees. Tom was now really frightened, and screamed lustily.

“ Sit still,” said George, holding his sides at Tom’s fright. “ There’s no danger. Ernest does that every day. See, old Dobbin is going to drink.”

There was nothing for Tom to do but to sit still. The horse put his nose under the water and breathed, and then went a step or two farther out from the bank.

Now, this horse was a knowing old fellow. Ladies’ horses are apt to get that way. He was sure that Ernest was not on his back as usual, so, even in his old age, he must have had a temptation to levity.

Whether he knew there was a mere city boy on his back, or not, I can not say, but it is suspected that he knew that very well. We can afford to leave that question undecided, but we can not afford to leave unrecorded what that

same horse had the impudence to do with Master Tom.

It may have been the sting of a horse-fly, or it may have been a touch from George's long gad, or it may have been his own knowingness, but he did a thing which horses seldom do when standing in water up to the knees. The horse indulged in a good sound shake. It was no half-and-half shake, but one of those when every bone in his frame is moved. Watch a horse after he has been rolling in the dust. That is the kind of shake he gave now.

Venturesome Thomas thought the end of the world had come. He felt worse than after catching the hardest ball he ever tried for. The solid earth seemed to be crumbling away beneath his feet. If Tom had ever heard the word or understood it, he would have said the situation was cataclysmal.

For one moment he clutched wildly at the horse's mane. It was to no effect. The knowing old beast must have known who was on his back. Some horses know a great deal.

Tom went sliding off, with a scream of fright, into three feet of water. He touched bottom easily enough, and came spluttering and puffing to the surface. The horse, as soon as he had accomplished his trick—if trick were intended—turned tail and walked to the bank.

When Tom could at last discern anything, he saw his friend George holding Dobbin's halter-rope with one hand and his own side with the other, while the woods echoed and re-echoed his laughter.

Crestfallen Tom walked to the house in his dripping clothes, and notwithstanding George's repeated inquiries, he was not visible to mortal eyes again that evening. It is hard to say whether his mother or his Aunt Ellen had most to do with his total eclipse this time. We suspect it was the former.

Perhaps Tom got even with George. We do not know for sure. It may have been the mere innocence of childhood, but this is the way it happened :

A few days after these events the children were thrown into a state of rapture. They were sitting under the trees in the orchard near the house, laughing, and chatting, and telling stories. It was after supper and near the time for milking the cows. No one noticed the approach of a young woman who walked up the lane from the road until she was close upon the group. Esther looked up and saw before her — Jane, who was carrying a valise and a clothier's flat cardboard box. The latter contained the new suit for Master Tom.

In a moment all was excitement. Esther and

Gerald and Leonard rushed to her and embraced the kindly domestic, inviting their cousins to do the same.

Just at that moment George and Master Tom came out of the kitchen.

“Jane! Jane! Jane!” shouted the young madcap, and threw himself into her arms.

George stood by, watching the scene.

“This is our Jane, George. Why don’t you come and do as everybody does?” said Tom.

George shifted from one foot to the other, changed the tin milk-pail from his right arm to his left, and actually blushed.

He went up, however, and shook hands, and said, in a remarkably awkward way for him:

“I am glad to see you, Miss Jane.”

CHAPTER XV.

FORTUNE

IT WOULD be an easy matter to fill a whole book with the adventures and happenings and mishaps of Tom Losely: Boy during that vacation. We have given enough to show that young Losely fairly merited the appellation — Boy.

It would be quite interesting to follow his career from boyhood to youth, from youth to young manhood, and even further; but that can not be done in this volume, which is written to show that a boy may be a real boy, a true, live boy, and at the same time a good boy.

Many things in Tom's life will show how that young gentleman had views, sometimes peculiarly his own. The following incident proves this. It occurred about two weeks after Tom's vacation in the country was over.

"I think it quite safe now for you to travel, Father, and I congratulate you on your rapid recovery," said Dr. Losely, the visiting physician at the Sisters' hospital.

The person addressed was a country parish

priest, whom we have already mentioned in these pages. Six weeks before he had come to the city on business connected with his church, and while there had been attacked by an illness brought on by overwork in the care of a large parish.

“Thank you, doctor; you have been extremely kind,” replied the priest. “Be good enough to let me know my indebtedness to you, that is, my cash indebtedness, for in other ways I shall always remain your debtor.”

“Do not mention that,” replied the physician.

“Yes, yes, I will, doctor. I want to know from you what I owe you.”

“Excuse me, Father,” said Dr. Losely; “you are a clergyman. I could not think of charging a priest for my services.”

“That would be all right,” urged the priest, “if I were your own pastor; but I am not, and I have no right to expect you to extend such a courtesy to a comparative stranger.”

“But, Father,” said Dr. Losely, with a graceful bow, but with a determination in his voice against which the priest saw it was useless to argue, “it is my privilege to be enabled to extend a courtesy to a priest.”

A few mutual expressions of good will and esteem, and they separated, the physician to make

his round of professional calls, the priest to the depot to take the train for his home.

At the same moment the above conversation was taking place at the hospital, two bright-eyed brothers, Tom and Gerald Losely, were sitting in the shade of the veranda of their father's home. The vacation time was not yet over, so they had no books or lessons to mar their happiness. Both were tired of playing ball with Fred Thorncroft, who had gone home, and now they were resting. The two sat facing each other, with their backs against the veranda posts.

"Say, Tommy, let's play wishing," said Gerald.

"Oh! what's the use? Nothing ever comes true when we do wish," replied Tom.

"But let's play and 'make believe,' anyway."

"All right."

"You begin," said Gerald.

"Well," said the elder boy, "I wish — oh! what shall I wish? I wish I was a priest."

"I wish I was a doctor, like pa, and as brother William is going to be," said Gerald.

They both paused and looked at each other. There was a comical expression on each face, as if both half expected that some fairy would come and tell them their wishes were granted.

There was a pause. Tom, endowed with one year's more wisdom than his brother, said:

"Look here, Gerald, this is not sensible. I can't be a priest, nor you can't be a doctor until bye and bye, when we're grown up."

"Oh! I don't want to be growed up, ever. I want to be a boy always," replied Gerald.

"I don't. I want to be a man, like William," said young Tom.

William, the eldest boy of the family, had, last summer, been graduated from college and had attained to the dignity of medical student at a medical college. He was therefore regarded by the younger members of the family as already a man.

"Let's wish for something for now," said Gerald, regardless of grammar, which to him was yet an almost unknown science.

"What would you like to have right now?" asked Tom.

"Peanuts!" said Gerald, with a sudden descent from the sublime.

"Boys, come here!"

The voice came from some one at the garden gate. The two boys looked in that direction and saw a priest standing on the sidewalk, with his satchel at his feet and his purse in his hand. He was the same who, a few minutes before, had left the Sisters' hospital. Tom and Gerald ran down the garden path, and stood with their hats in their hands.

“Are you Dr. Losely’s sons?”

“Yes, Father.”

“I thought you were when I saw the name on the sign-post. Here’s a present of a five-dollar bill for you. Tell your father when he comes home I am going to invite you boys to spend some days with me. I’ll write in a day or two. Good-bye. I have just time to catch the train.”

In a moment he was out of sight. The two brothers stood in mute surprise. They thought they must be dreaming, but the bill was in evidence to convince them that they were very wide-awake. For the first time in their life their fantastic game of wishing had materialized. They were almost overwhelmed with the vision of unlimited pop-corn, peanuts, and candy.

After their first surprise was over they held a whispered conversation on the porch over their good fortune. At the close of an earnest conversation with heads close together, the two glided out of the front gate and made for the corner grocery store in the next block.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. McCANN

HALF an hour later there was a ring at Dr. Losely's front door. William, the eldest brother, answered the call.

"Good day, Mr. McCann. What can I do for you? No one sick, I hope."

"Good day to ye, sir, an' a fine day it is. I just came up from me store beyant there to see if your house has been robbed — to find out if ye have discovered that ye have lost any money, at all."

"The house robbed! Good gracious, no! What makes you think so?" asked William.

"Well, 'tis me that is glad to hear ye say so, for sure, for they be fine boys — the best on the block. Didn't I often give them both a han'ful of candies on their way to school, just for the look of their bright eyes? God bless 'em. Still it's a puzzle entirely to me old head, sure it is."

"What you are saying, Mr. McCann, I assure you, is a greater puzzle to me," replied William, very much mystified.

"Well, now, it's a puzzle to meself, too, sir,

but I suppose it's all right. But you're sure ye haven't been robbed, eh?"

"Quite sure, Mr. McCann; but why all this talk about robbery?"

"If ye are sure of that, I suppose it's all right, but how they should have so much money is past me; but, says I to meself, says I—"

"But—" began William. He was going to ask for more explicit information, but thought it would be better to let the old man tell his own story in his own way.

"Go on, Mr. McCann."

"Says I to meself, there must be something wrong about this, says I; yet I know they are honest and good boys, and Father Fowler, the pastor, do be having the two well in hand—that I knowed well enough, for don't I see them serving on the altar every Sunday at the holy Mass, glory be?"

Now, William knew that two of his brothers served Mass on Sundays. With this light on the matter, he asked:

"Are you talking about my two younger brothers?"

"Who else should I be talking about to ye, sir? Sure, it was they as come to me store just now."

"For what purpose?"

"Tommy, he came in first, an' Gerald fol-

lowed, a kind o' shy-like; and Tommy said, says he, 'Mr. McCann, can ye change a bill for me?' says he. 'I think I can,' says I. 'Is it wan or a two,' says I. 'It's this,' says he; an' he puts down on the counter a five-dollar bill. Oh! thinks I to meself, it's his mother or yourself, Mr. William, has sent the boys round to the store to get the change. So I gives them the change. Then, sir, they both left the store. An' now, the strange part is coming. Five minutes after they come back again, an' bought ten cents' worth of peanuts. I watched them boys, and says I to meself, says I, 'That's strange! they don't go home, neither.' They went across the street and sat on the porch of Brown's house, under the shade of the big corner elm-tree there. So I thought I'd just come over and see if everything was all right, for it's meself that would be sorry to see the boys into any mischief at all."

"It's all right, Mr. McCann, I am sure. I thank you very much for the interest you take in my brothers, but I am quite sure there has been no stealing and everything will be explained. Don't be uneasy about them. I'll see to it. Thank you, Mr. McCann. Good day."

"I'm real glad to hear ye say so, Mr. William, for it's meself that would grieve sorely to see any harm come to the children."

The kind old man, with many a bow, left the

house, shaking his head in a puzzled way, and, from force of long habit, wiping his hands on his store apron, as he muttered to himself: "Five dollars — ten cents; peanuts; strange — good boys — good boys."

The two youngsters had watched the journey of the old storekeeper. They perceived William answer the bell, and had seen the conversation they could not hear. When the old man left, they saw with uneasiness that William remained on the doorstep. Had he learned of their good fortune? Why didn't he go back to his doctor books? He couldn't be a doctor unless he kept to his books. Did he want some of their feast?

William beckoned them. The two arose reluctantly. As they went they hurriedly filled their pockets with the coveted peanuts from the bag, determined to save part of the spoils if the main portion was confiscated by superior force.

"What's the meaning of all this, Tom?" asked the future physician, authoritatively.

"We did not think old McCann would mind changing the bill for us. We didn't think he'd give us away, did we, Gerald?"

"But where on earth did you get that five-dollar bill?"

"A priest called us down to the gate and he gave it to us, didn't he, Gerald?"

"A priest! A priest gave you five dollars!"

"It's true, William. He asked us if we were Dr. Losely's sons, and then he said he had a present for us, and said he was going to write to pa. He then hurried away to catch the train."

The big brother was convinced that Tom was telling the truth. He never dreamed of doubting his veracity. In fact, Tom had yet to tell his first lie.

"Why did you go down to Mr. McCann's and change it, and then buy peanuts?"

"'Cause pa never lets us keep more'n five cents when anybody gives us any money. We wanted to get our full ten cents' worth this time; didn't we, Gerald?"

"You had better go to your play-room now. Father will see to this when he comes home."

Tom and Gerald went to their play-room and were quiet for some time, content that they had saved the precious bag of nuts. William had resumed his books in his room. Nothing disturbed the summer stillness about the house.

After about half an hour, William heard a timid rap at his door, and Master Tom sidled into the room. He was blushing and had a nervous manner very unusual with the winner of numerous games of baseball and the hero of the gypsy adventure.

"Well, sir?" asked the big brother.

Tom began timidly:

"William, we will let you keep two dollars if you won't say anything to pa when he comes home."

William paused a moment, not catching the purport of the proposition immediately. Then, with as stentorian tones as he could command:

"Get out of here, you young conspirator!" he ordered.

Master Tom went, nor stood upon the order of his going. He fled precipitately.

A quarter of an hour later another gentle knock was heard.

"Come in."

The same blushing face appeared.

"What's the proposal this time, Tommy?" asked William.

"Gerald and I have been talking about this, William, and we will let you keep three dollars if you won't tell papa."

There was a second very unceremonious dismissal. The young man was very much amused, but he took good care not to let Master Thomas see it. Tom felt in some way he had the right of disposal of what belonged to him and Gerald.

It so happened that Mrs. Losely was making calls that afternoon, and did not return until quite late. It was no unusual thing for the doctor to be detained beyond meal-times by his patients. The children of the household that

night had their evening meal without their parents.

William considered the whole affair too good to keep. Before bed-time he had informed his father and mother of the occurrences of the day.

Before retiring for the night the children came to kiss their father and mother good-night, and, according to the beautiful custom in many Catholic families, kneel for their parents' blessing. When Tom knelt to his mother, she said to him:

“Has my boy done anything to-day of which he might be ashamed?”

Tom could not stand this. He gave one quick glance at William. He could bear a scolding, or in extreme cases a whipping, but not this. Somehow he felt the injustice of the implication. He burst into sobs and rushed upstairs to his room.

Less than an hour after, when William had not retired many minutes to his room, his door was silently opened and a head appeared. It was Tom's.

“Smarty! smarty! smarty! You gave me away, didn't you? Smarty!” and before the young man could catch him the intruder was gone.

The grave dignity of manhood is sometimes a great burden when only recently assumed. The dignified young graduate lay back on his bed

and indulged in a most undignified — in fact, perfectly boyish — burst of laughter. He regretted for the moment the great burden of his years, and he longed to be able to throw off at least ten, and for half an hour to make himself the same age as Tom and “have it out” with him by means of an old-fashioned pillow fight. Just then the burden of his dignity actually oppressed him.

The next morning the young medical student took no notice of the episode until after breakfast. He then called Tom out to the veranda.

The little fellow came with a troubled look and a suspicious quivering of the lips.

“So you called me —” William began, but seeing the piteous look of distress on his brother’s face, he immediately became touched. He felt a strange lump in his throat at the sudden knowledge that he possessed a superiority that could inflict pain. After all, he loved his little brother very dearly. His assumption of superiority was only very superficial. He was, at heart, still as much a real, true boy as were his younger brothers, and just because he was so, he was warm-hearted, generous, loving, and hated the very appearance of anything like meanness.

“Oh, Willie!” began Tom, “I was real mean last night, and after I called you names I couldn’t

go to sleep until I promised the gentle Jesus that I would beg your pardon, and I didn't mean it, and I — I — was mad — and I —”

He never finished. William caught the manly little fellow up in his big, strong arms, and in a moment was wiping away the tears, and had hard work to keep back his own.

CHAPTER XVII.

TOM'S LUCK

Tom was too young to go to college. William had already been graduated, but he was ten years older than his brother. Owing to the great tales Tom had heard his brother tell ever since he could remember, of the grand doings at the big place, his one ambition was to become big enough and old enough to attend there.

He looked forward longingly to the time when he would be allowed to enter the enchanted ground of the big college yard, and to pass unchallenged through the big college gates.

What mysteries those hitherto unexplored class-rooms were to the little fellow's imagination! How he watched, on going and coming from the Sisters' academy, with a feeling akin to envy, the big college boys freely come and go. And oh! the glory of wearing that red college cap with its golden monogram!

Many a time he questioned his mother for the why and the wherefore of his exclusion. In his

own way, and after his own fashion, he regretted that he was so young and so small.

"Why don't they let me go, mamma? Do you think they'll let me go next year? If I am not big enough yet, I'll be big enough next year, won't I?" and Tom would stand by the side of his mother's rocker and try to look very tall.

"Be a good boy at the academy," said his mother one day, "and if you bring home a good report this afternoon, I have something good to tell you."

"Oh! mamma, tell it to me now. I'll be good all the same, sure. Does Jane know, mamma?"

The artful youngster! He knew full well that if Jane knew he could wheedle and worm the secret from her.

"No, Jane knows nothing about it," said his mother.

"Mamma dear, tell me now," said Tom, as he pursed up his lips for a good-bye kiss.

"No; wait till evening, and bring home a good report."

So Master Thomas Losely, after a diplomatic visit to the kitchen, either to make sure Jane did not know or to assure Jane that he was not hungry, with his little reefer coat buttoned up under his chin to keep out the chill September air, and his little sailor cap crowning his perennially tousled hair, trudged off to the academy school

in a state of high excitement, which lasted all day and which was really against his chances of being able to bring home a favorable report.

The Sister who taught Tom's class saw there was something unusual that day in his spasmodically violent attempts to learn his lessons, and in his no less extraordinary periods of distraction.

When the little man came, at the end of the school day, to ask for his verbal report (which Mrs. Losely always exacted of her children), the Sister saw an extraordinarily anxious look in the usually bright, sunny face. Suspecting that something important at home depended on her report, she said:

“You may say you were good, Tommy.”

She was rewarded by seeing the sunshine break out at once in merry ripples over the boy's face. In a moment he was dancing with glee. In the next he made a rush for the door.

“Tommy! Tommy Losely!”

“Yes, Sister.”

“Have you forgotten something?”

“Oh! I didn't think. Thank you, Sister. Good-evening, Sister,” and the little fellow executed a Chesterfieldian bow which his sister Esther had taught him. Twenty seconds later he was scampering as fast as two little legs could carry him toward home and mother.

Throwing his hat and his books on the floor, and his arms around his mother's neck, the young whirlwind scarcely took time to give her the usual home-coming kiss.

"What you going to tell me, mamma? Quick."

"Patience, my son. First, has Tom been good at school to-day?"

"Oh! yes, ma. Sister Juliana said I might tell you I was good. But my! she looked straight into my eyes, and I thought she was going to say no. Then she looked awfully funny at me and said yes."

Mrs. Losely made a good guess at what had happened, and smiled.

"Well, as you bring home a good report, I must keep my promise. You are now eight years old, and you know you have not yet learned how to go to confession. Next May I hope you will receive your first holy communion. But you must learn how to go to confession first. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, mamma dear."

"So, Father Fowler has no objection, and Father Wells of the college called yesterday, and you are to go to the college for instruction in the first-confession class."

Little Quicksilver opened his eyes wider than he had ever opened them before in all his life.

The portals of the college were open to him! It was as if paradise were free to him. Not the cause of his going into the college, but the fact of his going there was what entranced him.

For a moment the great news made him silent. He could not realize his good fortune. To be allowed to go into the great yard, to pass the great gates unchallenged!

“Oh! mamma!” he exclaimed, after an unusually long silence for him. “Hurrah! and may I go into the big yard? And oh! shall I go into the college too?”

He could not yet seem to realize all his good fortune.

“And shall I be with those big boys, too, mamma?”

“Of course you will go to the yard as well as to the college. But you will not meet the big boys, or many of them, for they will have gone home when you are to go. You are to go three times a week, at half past three.”

The delight of having permission to enter the ground so long forbidden to him was a little dampened when Tom learned that he would not meet any of the college boys, many of whom he pictured to himself at this period of his life as the greatest men of the world.

He had enough, however, to keep him excitedly talking till supper-time, and long after. It

is safe to say that when Tom Losely laid his curly head on his pillow that night there was not a happier boy in all the great metropolis.

Father Wells was so good a manager of small children that at the request of several parents in the vicinity he had been persuaded to undertake this extra work. He saw at the first meeting that the novelty of the situation precluded the possibility of giving anything like an instruction. He spent some time in getting acquainted with his young charges, told them a few stories, assured them all that when they were old enough they would be admitted as students, and then showed them over a great part of the college.

For the first week the college and grounds were, to Tom Losely, a veritable fairyland. All was strange and wonderful. His admiration was about equally divided among the gymnasium, the museum, with its wonderful animals, and the beauties of the students' chapel, with a slight inclination in favor of the first. Well, Tom was a ball-player, as we know. Wonderful tales the boy told his father and mother and Gerald and Leonard and his sister on his return from his first few visits. It was a fine trait in Willam's character that during all this period of Tom's gushing enthusiasm he remained speechless, although he was an old student of the college.

He did not want to spoil his little brother's pleasure.

The class progressed favorably. The boys were earnest and intelligent. Father Wells one day gave them a clear and simple talk on the malice of sin. After explaining the wickedness and ugliness of it, and pointing out quite graphically the mercy of God in instituting the Sacrament of Penance, he showed how dreadful a thing it was to remain in sin even for one night. Might not God call the soul to judgment that night? Then if it were found to be in sin it would never see God or the Blessed Mother in heaven.

Tom was deeply impressed, listening attentively to all that was said. That evening he did not go straight home, but walked up and down the big yard with another member of the class. That boy was Harry Quinn, who was about Tom's own age.

"Did you hear what Father Wells said?" asked Tom.

"Yes, he talked about the danger of staying in sin for one night," said Harry.

"Yes, and he said if one should die that way he would never go to heaven."

"Nor ever see the Blessed Mother," continued Harry.

"Well, I'm afraid," remarked Tom.

“ Why? ”

“ 'Cause I have done something very naughty,” came the ingenuous confession from the little fellow, “ and I can't go to confession yet, 'cause Father Wells says we have to wait two weeks yet! ”

“ My! ” said Harry Quinn.

“ What shall I do, Harry? ” asked Tom, in perplexity.

“ I don't know. Was it very naughty? ”

“ Awful! ”

There was a long pause. Both felt like crying; Tom, from the real perplexity of the case, the other from sympathy. Tom dug his toe into the gravel. The other performed a similar operation with his heel, but both were unable to escape the dilemma.

“ You can't go to Father Wells — 'tain't time.”

“ Sure, ” said Tom, and the hole in the gravel became larger.

“ Well, then, I think — I think you had better tell your mother, ” said Harry.

“ Tell mamma! ”

“ Yes, that's the next best thing; but say, was it very bad? ”

“ Yes, it was dreadful. ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW TOM SETTLED IT

HARRY QUINN, after he had given our young friend such sound advice, went home, leaving Tom to think the matter over as he paced up and down the great yard of the college. Tom Losely was a boy who had many good qualities, one of which was sturdiness of character. It is true, he would escape out of a window to play a game of ball, or use any amount of diplomacy or finesse with Jane for cookies, and lunches, and tarts, but behind all the mere tricks and pranks of boys there was a genuineness of character which always accompanies delicacy of conscience.

After an unusually long train of thought, for him, Tom Losely determined on the "next best thing." He would tell his mother everything.

That evening the boy was unusually silent at supper. His mother noticed by his troubled look and subdued air that there was something wrong, but, like a wise woman, waited for developments, which she felt sure would come.

Presently the boy who had done "something

awful" came into the sitting-room. He stood at the opposite side of the table, his chin resting on his breast.

"What is the matter, Tommy?"

The boy hung his head, but did not speak. There was a look of deepest trouble on the usually bright and happy face. His mother took him on her lap, gently stroked his shining hair, but did not speak. With that silent tact, which only a mother can exercise, she was giving him courage to speak. Whatever the trouble was now, she saw that it was different from Tom's disobedience, which was repaired by punishment and acknowledgment. She saw, although she did not yet know the cause, that this was a critical moment in the boy's life, one of those moments in which character is moulded and shaped for a life-time.

"Father Wells said to-day, mamma," began Tom, with that determination which was characteristic of him, and yet quite timidly, "that it was a dreadful thing to remain in sin even for one night."

"Yes, my child, that is true," said Mrs. Losely, her cheek resting on the boy's head.

"And if one should die, then he would never see God or the Blessed Mother."

"Isn't that true, Tommy?"

"Yes, mamma, and I'm — afraid to go —

(something suspiciously like a sob)—to go to bed to-night —'cause I can't go (sob) to confession yet, and I done—I done—a—awful thing."

Tom threw his arms around his mother's neck and buried his face in her bosom. Then she let him cry. Then:

"What has my little boy done?" in almost a whisper, but oh! so encouragingly gentle.

"I—I don't—like—to say."

"Don't be afraid. Tell mamma. What has her boy done?"

He did not speak. She let him take his time, meanwhile softly stroking his head.

After a while he said, in almost a whisper:

"Mamma—I—I went down to the grocery store yesterday—"

"Yes, my child, I remember I sent you to Mr. McCann's."

"And—I—and I—I stole—"

"What did you steal?"

"I stole—a—a fig."

The confession was made! The child wept and sobbed on his mother's breast as if his little heart would break. The mother let him weep on that safe resting-place until the first gust of sorrow was passed and her own emotion was under control. She threw her arms around the grief-stricken boy and let him cry. Her own

eyes, as she looked down on her child's curly head, were not unmoistened. Raising them to heaven, she silently prayed that he might always retain such tenderness of conscience. She saw this was no time to tell him the difference between a venial and a mortal sin.

"You know it is very wrong to steal?"

"Y-yes, mamma," came the stifled reply, between the sobs.

"And you will never do such a thing again?"

"N-no, mamma."

"Now, then, kneel down here at my knee and make an act of contrition."

This was done with as much distinctness as his sobs and tears would permit. It was distinct enough, certainly, for the Recording Angel.

"Now, you know, my brave boy," said his mother, "you must make restitution. Do you know what that means?"

"Yes, mamma — to pay back. But I didn't have to pay back to papa the ten cents when I bought the peanuts."

"No, my son; that was different. Here you stole — oh! isn't that an ugly word, Tommy! — while there the money was actually given to you boys. It is even yours now in papa's bank."

"Yes, mamma."

"Very well. So you will have to pay the price of that fig to the grocery man out of your

own money from your tin bank. Are you willing, Tommy, to do this?"

"Yes'm."

"Very good. To-morrow morning you shall go over to the grocery store."

The morning came, and with it the unpleasant duty for Tom. He had the strength of his mother's kiss as he started out on his errand of justice.

Now, Master Tom Losely was a shrewd boy in his own way. During the short journey to the grocery store of Mr. McCann he had arrived at the correct conclusion, by some occult process of reasoning known only to boys, that he was not bound to pay more than the value of the fig. The great difficulty was to find out the value of one fig.

Arrived at the store, he felt extremely awkward. He hung his head in the same manner as he had done before his confession to his mother, yet he was determined to pay no more than the fig's value.

He took his stand near the grocer's front counter and waited. Seeing that Tom was not being waited on — there being a good many customers in the store at the time — Mr. McCann went over to his favorite.

"Well, my little man Tom, what can I do for ye to-day?"

“ Please, Mr. McCann, how many figs for a cent? ”

The merchant was surprised. He had never, perhaps, in his life been asked such a question. Accustomed to sell figs by the pound or the box, it is certain he had never calculated the cash value of an individual fig.

The storekeeper stood upright behind the counter and scratched the back of his bald head, staring perplexedly at the miniature customer, who, with one hand tightly grasping his cent, and the other behind his back, closely watched the grocer’s face. Mr. McCann thought Tom had a cent to spend and wished to make a change from the usual candy stick or chewing-gum. Without really calculating the number of figs which a cent’s purchasing power would procure for the boy, and being, as we know, very fond of the bright little fellow before him, whom he desired to send away satisfied, he said to him:

“ Oh! I suppose five or six.”

Now, Tom Losely’s arithmetical proficiency was not of the most advanced order. He began to think, and the more he thought the more confused he became.

“ But mamma said I was to pay for it out of my own money.”

This was worse than Greek to the busy business man. Eccentric as he might be, he was,

however, a close observer, and he saw that tears were very near. He became greatly interested.

“Tell me all about it, my boy,” he said, kindly. Tom, silent, hung his head.

“Don’t be afraid, my child. Tell me everything. It’s me that would be glad to help ye,” said Mr. McCann, more than half suspecting the truth had in it more of tragedy than comedy.

Tom’s lips began to quiver. Little pearls rolled down his cheeks one after another. With the tears, he found his tongue and told the big, kindly man before him the same story he had related to his mother the night before, and ended by saying:

“And I don’t know, sir, how to pay for the fig.”

When the tale was told, the old grocery man felt the strongest inclination to take the little fellow up in his arms and press him to his heart, which neither time nor business cares had altogether hardened, but a broad, marble-top counter was between them. Some people may lose their hair, their sight may grow dim, and increasing years give them increasing adipose tissue, yet they never grow old. They remain young till they die of old age. The emotions and thoughts and buoyancy of youth are perennially fresh in them. You can generally know such by their love of children. When Mr. McCann spoke, his

voice was decidedly husky. Strange how hard it is to clear one's throat sometimes.

"Now, Master Tom, let me see if we can't settle this affair. Sure, it won't be so very hard, I'm thinking. Now pay attention, as me old school teacher in Ireland said many a time to me — pay attention! Don't ye see, me boy, if ye buy six figs for a cent, an' ye gives me back wan o' thim, which belongs to me, ye'll restore what was not yours? I gets what was me own, an' ye have five figs for your eating. Sure, the sol-u-tion is aisy."

Tom understood now. He invested in a cent's worth of figs and returned one, and that is how he settled it.

CHAPTER XIX.

TOM'S SACRIFICE

“O H! MAMMA,” shouted Tom Losely enthusiastically, one afternoon near the end of September, as he ran into the house after school, “Father Fowler announced to-day that there would be Benediction every night all next month in honor of the Holy Angels, and I’m to serve all the time. Hurrah!”

As usual, he threw his hat into a corner and his books and slate on the lounge. He then made a dive for his mother’s favorite rocker, which he began to rock vigorously, testing the rockers severely, and also his own equilibrium.

“I am glad to hear that, my son,” said his mother. “You know that October is the month dedicated to the Holy Angels, and our parish church is under their patronage.”

“Yes, ma; and if I serve all next month the Sister will have to excuse me some of my lessons, won’t she? They’re horrid, anyhow.”

“I hardly know,” said Mrs. Losely. “Let us consider the matter. Certainly you must not disappoint Father Fowler if you can help it.”

"Of course not, mamma."

"Isn't it a great privilege to serve at the altar?"

"Sure it is, mother."

"And isn't it a duty you have to perform to prepare your lesson each day?"

"Ye—es, ma'am."

The answer came more slowly than the previous one. Tom was sharp enough to see where the conversation was drifting. He did not want to be caught in a trap.

"Which do you think should come first—the duty or the privilege?"

Tommy, aged eight, took refuge, like many an older person in a quandary, in silence.

"Well, which?" asked his mother, after a sufficient pause.

Tom did not want to commit himself to any positive statement, but as his mother did not speak again, he was forced to make some reply.

"But if I am to serve every night, how am I to get my lessons?"

"I think we can manage that, my son."

This was ominous for poor Tom. Besides, he knew from past experience that his mother's arrangements had to be followed.

"When do you usually begin to study them?"

"About half past seven, ma, until nine, and then you make me go — to bed."

"And what do you do before half past seven?"

She knew quite well, but wanted him to answer.

"Why, you know, mamma. Siss and I and Gerald have some fun, of course. It is necessary for children to have some rational amusement. All work and no play makes a boy a blockhead."

These last two sentences Tom had heard his father use, and he was sharp enough to take them up.

"I go over to Fred Thorncroft's sometimes. Don't we play parlor croquet with the Gateses, next door, and don't we —"

"I know, my boy, very well. Now, I have a proposition to make to you. If you want to serve at Benediction all next month, you will have to give up some of your play-time after supper, and devote it to your home tasks."

At such a prospect Tom's face looked rueful. Knowing from previous successful attempts — if we except the one when he fell into the mud — the power of an appealing eye, he tried to catch hers. For the second time in his life he failed. His mother continued:

"If you get at your books at a quarter to seven, you will be able to study for three-quarters of an hour, and when you come home from

church you will have another three-quarters. That will make up the usual time. Is my boy willing to make this sacrifice in honor of the Holy Angels during the coming month?"

"But, mother—" began the boy, who was reluctant to give up his play-time.

"There is no 'but' in the case, my son. You must be willing to make the sacrifice or you will not have the honor of serving at the altar. Which do you choose?"

Tom did not answer at once. He was thinking hard, trying to find a way of escape. Suddenly a peculiar light shone in his eyes. He would appeal to Father Fowler, his confidential friend and adviser in all his little troubles and difficulties.

He had a vague hope that the Father would solve the difficulty for him in such a way that he would not lose his play-time or forfeit his serving at the Benediction.

"Mamma, I will see my 'viser,'" said the boy, with almost comical gravity. Mrs. Losely smiled and said:

"Very well; Father Fowler is at home, for he passed the window a moment ago. Be back for supper."

With a bound the merry-hearted boy was out of the house, and in less than three minutes he was skipping up the stairs to Father Fowler's

study. The priest's housekeeper never showed Tom into the parlor, as she did other visitors. It would have been of no use. He would not have stayed there.

"What's the matter to-day, Tom?" asked Father Fowler, as the boy stood, hat in hand and panting from his rapid ascent of the stairs.

"Lots, Father. Mamma wants me to give up my play-time after supper all next month, so I may serve at Benediction without getting off my home lessons."

It must be confessed against Master Thomas that he did not put the case exactly as it stood. Father Fowler surmised this.

"Well?"

"Isn't that too hard, Father? Can't I serve without doing that?"

"Can you serve and get your lessons too?"

"Some of them, Father."

"All of them?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do, Tom. You know how long they take each night."

"But the Sister would excuse me if you told her you wanted me to serve, Father," pleaded Tom.

"That would not do, my boy. We must not neglect duty for more pleasing occupations, even to attend Benediction. It is more pleasing for

you to serve than to pore over your spelling and arithmetic and geography I grant, but to pore over these things is, just now, Thomas Losely's duty. You — have — to — do — what — your — mother — wants, Tom."

This last sentence was given slowly and with decision. There was a tacit understanding that when the priest used the slow, judicial tone, as now, it was "the adviser" speaking, and the pronouncement was always taken as final by Tom Losely.

"All right, Father," was the answer, slowly given.

"That's right. Now, let me tell you something. No sacrifice was ever made without bringing its own reward in some way or other. Watch and see whether the Holy Angels, before the month is out, do not reward you in some manner for what you do for them. Now, Tom, I'm hungry; won't you stay and have supper with me?"

"No, thank you, Father; not to-night," answered Tom, somewhat regretfully. He knew what Father Fowler's suppers were, or what he made them on these occasions. "Mother told me to be back for supper."

"All right. God bless you. See if my words do not come true."

The boy ran at full speed home to the next

block. Rapid action was necessary for Tom, just now. Like a whirlwind he rushed into the room where his mother was quietly sewing.

"It's all right, mamma dear."

"What did your 'adviser' say? What did you decide upon?"

"I give up my play-time—" and Tom felt very brave just then.

"Well done, my son; spoken like a true Catholic boy," said Mrs. Losely, who knew how to encourage as well as direct.

"But only for October, though," stipulated the boy, who seemed to become suddenly impressed with the magnitude of his sacrifice, "and besides, the Invincibles ain't playing ball any more for this season, anyway, so it don't matter so much after all. My 'viser says yes, and I always do what my 'viser says."

"For October only. In honor of the Holy Angels you sacrifice three-quarters of an hour's play every day for a month. I am sure they will reward you for this," said Mrs. Losely, as she drew her son to her and kissed him on the forehead. Was ever a mother's kiss or a mother's blessing given unavailingly?

CHAPTER XX.

TOM'S PRESENTIMENT

THE next evening, as Tom walked home from the church a little ahead of his father and mother, he said to his sister Esther:

“ Say, Est, both mamma and Father Fowler said the angels were going to do something for me 'cause I gave up that play-time. Wonder what both of them mean, anyway.”

Esther did not know exactly what to say. She was four years older than Tom, and therefore supposed to be four years wiser. Tom rattled on:

“ My! wouldn't it be great if they sent me a wheel! But, say, Estie, honest now, are there such real things as angels, or are they only like Santa Clauses? Isn't it only God doing things, and then we say it is our guardian angels? ”

“ Thomas Losely,” said that vivacious youth's sister, severely, “ what are you talking about? How can you be so silly? ”

“ No, but — whoever saw an angel? and if you can't see a thing, how do you know it is? ”

"Lots of people have seen angels. Do you see the electricity that makes the light on the street corner?"

"No, of course not. You're silly now. Sister Juliana says no one can tell exactly what 'lectricity is."

"But the effect is there, isn't it?"

"Course."

"Well, then?"

That seemed to settle the argument for Esther, but as if driving home the point, she added:

"Where's your catechism? Don't you know the chapter on angels yet? Didn't you pray especially to your guardian angel down at Uncle William's?"

Tom knew the chapter perfectly. He began repeating the questions and answers from memory, and thus satisfied his sister. Of course he believed in angels, but he was fond of asking questions. He put another which he had learned from George Wood.

"Siss, do you know why we say, 'Pray for us, holy Mother of God'?"

"So that we may be helped by her intercession, of course," answered Esther.

"Wrong. Try again."

"Because she is so powerful with her divine Son."

"Wrong."

"Because she loves us so much."

"Wrong again. Who's silly now?"

"Oh! I give it up. What's the answer?"

"That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Caught you that time, didn't I?"

Tom Losely's reward came in a way he least expected. The arrangement of Mrs. Losely regarding his home lessons worked well. He got along splendidly that month.

On the night of the twenty-fifth of the month, Tom had retired, under the watchful eye of his mother, to his own little bed-room. No reward had yet come to him, although he never lost confidence in the promises of the priest and of his mother. He imagined that if they were correct the angels would soon be thinking about him now.

On the night in question he was unusually restless. His window faced the church, and although Fred Thorncroft's house obstructed the view of it and of the priest's residence, yet above the roof he could see the spire of the church, with its bright gilt cross, and the smaller spire over the transept. This particular night was starry and frosty. Tom stood gazing at the church roof longer than usual. He made his spiritual visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the church, which was his beautiful custom every night be-

fore jumping into bed, and still he lingered at the window.

The boy was healthy and strong, a most unlikely subject to be given to "notions," yet this night he was filled with uneasiness — a kind of premonition of coming danger, that took possession of him, and do what he would, he could not shake it off. Remember, Tom Losely did not know of such a thing as "nerves." The vague impression of danger seemed, in some unaccountable way, to be connected with his "adviser" and friend, Father Fowler. The longer he remained at the window the stronger became the impression that the priest was exposed to some kind of danger.

Tom jumped into bed. He tried to say his last prayers and compose himself to sleep. No sleep came, and the impression grew stronger and stronger as the moments passed slowly. At last he could stand it no longer. He got out of bed, dressed partly, and, barefooted, crept noiselessly down-stairs to where his father and mother were sitting.

Seeing her son enter in this fashion, Mrs. Losely hurriedly arose and asked him if he were ill. His father dropped the evening paper he was reading, in sheer amazement at the boy's unusual appearance.

"Mamma, I can't sleep, and I am sure he is

in danger of some kind," were the incoherent words of the boy, said in a peculiar way, very unlike his usual direct manner.

"Sleep! danger! what's the child talking about?" exclaimed his mother, in some alarm.

"What's up, Tom?" asked Dr. Losely. He thought that perhaps Tom had been in a fight or something of that sort that day at school and was now suffering some uneasy twinges of conscience.

"I thought it was you at first, pa. But it isn't you. It's Father Fowler. Won't you go and help him? Do go."

"Me! Father Fowler!" exclaimed his father, in his turn completely mystified.

"Look here, Tom. You have been eating something for supper that did not agree with you. Trot back to bed, boy, and try to sleep it off."

Tom, however, was not to be put off in that way. He had not come down-stairs merely to be sent back again.

"Something is wrong with him, father, and I feel it. I don't know what's the matter, but I am sure Father Fowler is in some danger. Perhaps he is sick."

"Bless the child!" exclaimed his mother, "you saw Father Fowler to-night in church.

What could be the matter with him? You must be going to be sick."

"No, mamma, I'm quite well. But I feel—I know—Father Fowler is in some trouble. Oh! father, won't you go to him? Oh! please, do go!"

There was a strange wistfulness in the lad's voice that, somehow, deeply touched his father, who knew how his son loved the priest. The physician still thought that the boy had some crack-brained notion in his head, arising from an upset stomach.

Just at that moment a strange thing happened. There was a sharp ring at the house telephone. Dr. Losely went into the next room to answer the call, Tom and his mother waiting in silence.

"Hello, central," they heard him say. "Hello! Well, yes; what is it?"

The physician heard the musical hum of the wire; then a voice which he could not recognize:

"Bring police—Father Fowler's house—quick—da—" and there was a sharp click in his ear and the connection was broken.

The physician was startled by the coincidence of the imperfect message and his son's strange announcement. He decided to act at once. He was sure that his family had no clue to the nature of the message. Not wishing to make his wife nervous, he announced that he had a

sick-call in the near neighborhood. Taking a good stout cane with him, he said in an off-hand way to Tom:

“All right, my boy. I have to go out, and I will drop around by the church. Go and jump into bed, and if you think Father Fowler is in danger, pray for him.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE REWARD

WHAT was taking place at Father Fowler's residence? As near as all of them could afterward reckon, it was about the time that Tom Losely had jumped out of bed for the first time that a big-boned, brawny man rang the priest's door-bell. The summons was answered by the priest's housekeeper, who touched a small hand-bell in the hall, as a signal to the priest that he was wanted in the parlor.

Father Fowler was in the midst of a psalm in his office when he heard the signal. He did not come down until he had finished it, although he heard the visitor below pacing the floor restlessly. In a moment he came down, in his cassock and beretta, with his finger in the page of his breviary where he had stopped.

He was a slight man of medium height, and of a somewhat frail physique, but his face was finely chiseled and reminded one of a statue. The forehead was high and very white and was relieved by thick hair and heavy, overhanging black eyebrows. The chief charm of his face

lay in the large, clear, piercing gray eyes — eyes which disclosed, not only the zeal of the priest, but a trained and lofty mind. His countenance possessed much magnetic power over his fellow men.

As he entered the parlor he bowed to the stranger, who he saw was apparently a respectable workingman, and motioned him to a chair. Both sat down, facing each other, the gas light falling full on the face of each.

“ You are Father Fowler? ” began the stranger.

“ Yes, what can I do for you? ”

“ I have been wanting to see you a long time.”

The priest bowed slightly.

“ And I think the time has come to do it now.”

“ Do what, my friend, may I ask? ”

“ Do what? Don’t you know as well as I do? I have come to kill you — to cut you into pieces. It won’t hurt much with this, ” and the man produced an enormous bread-knife from under his shabby overcoat.

Father Fowler saw at once that the man was completely insane.

He did not shrink for a moment from the man’s gaze. With extraordinary presence of mind he fixed his large eyes on those of the other man, who, as the priest clearly saw, had not been drinking, but was simply out of his

mind. The father smiled at the last remark. Without changing countenance or manner, he humored the visitor in his dangerous fancy.

“Certainly, certainly. Is that all? That is soon done.”

He saw the only way to escape was to gain time. The madman then mumbled something about the knife. The other answered in an off-hand sort of way:

“Oh! the knife is good enough for that purpose, and strong enough too. There need be no trouble about that.”

“Well, we may as well set about it, then, eh?” were the next ominous words — words which would have made the stoutest heart quail under the circumstances.

“Yes, yes,” replied the priest, “if you think so. But look here, my friend; you see this nice carpet, don’t you? Now, that was lately given me by my parishioners, and if you are going to cut me into pieces, wouldn’t it be a thousand pities to do it here and spoil this fine carpet? Don’t you think so? And it would spoil my fine wall-paper too. Now, I will tell you what we will do. You and I can walk over to the school house, and the job can be done there. You see, there are no fine carpets there, and it can be done just as well there as here, can it not?”

“That seems a very sensible idea. It does

seem a pity to spoil the carpet, certainly. Yes, we will go to the school house, eh?"

"Exactly! Capital! Just wait a minute. I'll get my overcoat. It's cold outside."

"All right; I'll wait."

"I won't be a minute. Here's the evening paper till I come back."

The priest left the room. He ran to his housekeeper, and in a whisper told her to call up policeman Green, a block away, and tell him he was wanted at the pastoral residence instantly.

He realized that it would not do to keep the madman waiting too long in the parlor. He feared in that case he might run amuck through the house and perhaps kill the housekeeper before assistance could arrive. As soon as he knew the message had been sent, he put on his great-coat and boots and came down-stairs.

"Excuse me for keeping you waiting," he said, as if talking to an ordinary acquaintance; "I had my slippers on, and had to put on my boots. It is too cold to go out in slippers."

The crazed man still held the big knife in his hand, while he muttered something to himself. The priest let him talk on as long as he chose, for he knew he was gaining time that way. After a little while the man suddenly started from his reverie. He stood up and came toward

the plucky pastor, who thought he was going to be attacked then and there.

Fixing his keen eyes on the demented man, he said, smilingly, and as if dealing with an every-day subject:

“ My dear sir, I am really very much obliged to you for not spoiling this really fine carpet. It is not every one who would be so careful. It would be altogether too bad to kill me in so nice a room, wouldn’t it? ”

“ Yes, certainly. The school house will do just as well. My wife never lets me kill any one in the house. She’s very particular about her carpets, too.”

“ Come on, then; we will go to the school house,” and both went out of the front door. Father Fowler cast an anxious glance up the street. To his intense relief, he saw the policeman just emerging from his house. At the same moment he saw Dr. Losely speak to the policeman. They both seemed very much surprised, but it was afterward learned that the message the physician received was intended for the policeman. The telephone clerk had made a mistake and put in circuit the wrong number. The two hastened toward the priest’s residence.

The policeman was as yet some distance away. Father Fowler saw it was yet necessary to keep

the madman's attention distracted. He began speaking of the knife:

"You are sure that knife is sharp enough, Mr.—Mr.—what is your name?"

"I am not going to tell you my name. It would do you no good. The papers won't get it then. They have hounded me long enough. Yes, the knife is sharp enough."

He began gesticulating with it in a dangerous manner. By this time the policeman was but ten feet in front of the two. Making a sign for the policeman to pass on the outer side, the priest whispered hurriedly as he passed:

"Arrest him — insane — wants to kill me."

The officer gave an understanding look, and dropped behind. Then, quick as lightning, he swung around and pounced upon the man, securing both arms. In ten seconds his wrists were handcuffed behind his back. The arrest was made so suddenly that the demented man had no time to resist. The bloodthirsty-looking knife fell clanging to the ground.

"Use him well, Green," said the father. "Take care of him; we will have him sent to an asylum to-morrow."

Father Fowler wiped the perspiration from his brow, although the temperature was near freezing. The strain had been a severe one. When

all danger was past, a reaction set in. He felt unnerved and shattered.

So Tom Losely's presentiment and strange premonition of danger to his "adviser" and friend had something in it, after all.

When Father Fowler heard of the strange affair, he invited Tom the next day to tea, in order to talk it all over. When every detail of the event had been thoroughly discussed and exhausted, there was a pause.

"Tom," said the priest, presently, "does it strike you that the Holy Angels have sent you any reward for the sacrifice you have made this month?"

"No, not yet, Father; but the month isn't out yet. Maybe they'll send me a wheel yet."

Had Tom at this juncture been talking to Jane, instead of to Father Fowler, we might have suspected that the last remark, under the supposition that Jane had as much power over wheels as over tarts, was a very diplomatic one. As he was talking to a man whom he loved and revered, he is to be acquitted of any such intention. His remark was made in all simplicity.

"Think again, my boy, and see if something has not happened."

Tom thought for a while. He could not remember anything approaching a reward that had

come to him. No, Tom did not know of anything.

“Was it not a reward to be instrumental in saving your pastor’s life?”

“I didn’t do that, Father. Papa came out and told the policeman.”

“True; but what induced your father to come to my assistance?”

“Why, the telephone call, Father.”

“No; that was imperfect. The connection, he says, was broken as soon as he heard my name over the wire. Then, he was called up, by mistake, instead of the policeman.”

“But wouldn’t it be enough to bring him, anyway?”

“Not necessarily. He might have thought it some unimportant message; for you, for instance, to come and see me about serving an earlier Mass than usual, or anything like that, to which he would have attached very little importance.”

“Do you mean to say, Father, that it was the Holy Angels that put those thoughts into my head?” asked Tom, in awed amazement.

“I am strongly of that opinion, my dear boy. Almighty God is not limited in his methods of dealing with His children. He could use the angels for the purpose as well as any other of His creatures.”

Tom had risen, greatly excited.

“Sit down, Tom, and listen. There is no reason to discredit the opinion that He permitted your guardian angel to so fill your mind last night that you had to go down-stairs and tell your parents.”

“Well, then,” said Tom, whose excitement was growing, “giving up my play-time has been well rewarded. Just think, Father, a few hours of play given up, and for that I was allowed to save the life of a priest, and our own priest, too. Reward! Well, I should just think!”

The two sat a long time in silence; the boy thought he saw two round drops roll down the cheeks of his “'viser” and friend, but Tom wasn’t quite sure, because he had not very clear sight himself just then.

CHAPTER XXII.

FORESHADOWS

IT MUST not be supposed that Master Thomas Losely was always enjoying these high moments, such as mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter. Such seldom come to any one. However, his October self-denial had done him good. The Sisters at the academy were well pleased with his work. This good state of affairs lasted up till Christmas-time. The good nuns had a system of sending home periodically reports of the progress — alas! sometimes it was retrogression — of the pupils under their charge.

Master Losely's report for December was exceptionally good. Gerald and Leonard also brought home a very good account of themselves just before the holidays, but Tom carried home in triumph so excellent a record a few days before Christmas that Dr. and Mrs. Losely had to put their heads together to see what fitting reward Santa Claus should send our young hero.

One thing was decided upon even before the official report reached home. Mrs. Losely, by

some mysterious way known only to women, had learned beforehand of the coming good report. It may have been because she was often at early Mass on week-days and had a chance now and then to speak to the Sisters that she learned the secret; or it may have been some other way. We do not know.

She had found out, however, Tom's good work at the academy. She and the doctor, therefore, decided that in reward for Tom, and also for Esther, who had done good work with the Mesdames, that they would invite the cousins from the country to spend the Christmas week with the children.

For the country children there would be the novelty of a four o'clock Solemn High Mass, and another at half past ten, with Solemn Vespers and Benediction at five o'clock on Christmas day, besides the Christmas dinner and fun at home.

St. Stephen's day was to be set aside for a children's party. The evening following the doctor and his wife would take them all to see a pantomime. On Holy Innocents' day Fred Thorncroft, who had come home from boarding-school for the holidays, was to give a party.

Besides all this, there was the old-fashioned custom in the Losely family of spending one evening of the octave at home quietly around the Christmas fire, baking chestnuts, cracking wal-

nuts, and telling old folk-lore tales. The children always looked forward to this evening with the greatest pleasure. It was always considered one of the greatest days of the holidays by the doctor's children, and he did not doubt but that it would prove equally acceptable to his nephews and nieces.

"May we have a Christmas crib, papa, in our play-room?" asked Tom of his father a week before Christmas.

"You may, my son, if you are willing to pay from your own money for the evergreens."

Tom thought for a moment. He knew he had about two dollars in his tin bank.

"All right, papa. I'll pay for the trees." He felt like a millionaire at the moment.

"Esther must also contribute her share. She can pay for the bambino, and among you all I suppose there is skill enough to manufacture the manger. The Wise Men and the animals are up in the garret from last year."

Dr. Losely had the custom of making his children duly value their pleasure by previous self-sacrifice. How busy all the children were for several days before the holy feast! and Tom! how particularly careful he was of his conduct!

Was he not now a big boy, eight years old, nearly nine? His birthday fell on the sixth of January, and although he had not outgrown the

tradition of the chimney and the reindeer in connection with Santa Claus, yet he had an eye to the possibilities of the sixth of January as well as Christmas.

With his dealings with Jane we have seen that he was not above using finesse when it served his turn. We are not for one moment going to accuse him of anything like that in regard to Christmas and Santa Claus or his birthday, but it was so strange that he should be so good just about this time. Just now was there ever a boy more prompt in rising?

“Children, it’s time to get up,” sounded father’s voice along the corridor all the year round. It was really remarkable with what alacrity Tom obeyed just now, when all along in the summer, when it was much pleasanter to be out of doors, he was so tired, and so sleepy, and found it so hard to keep his eyes open. I really have to ask the children who read this story why Tom Losely acted so differently in December and in June.

Did you ever hear of a boy asking his mother or the cook whether he should not carry in a bucket of coal, in June or July? Boys are not willing to run six or seven times a day to the store, a couple of blocks away, in midsummer, are they? Boys do not always have respect for

the door-mat, even so late in the year as November.

It is marvelous how their manners improve when December comes in. During this month Tom Losely, for instance, would not so much as dream of walking on the carpet in the hall without the most careful cleaning of his shoes of every particle of mud on the door-mat outside. What makes this change in boys and girls — especially in boys — in the month of December? It is a great puzzle to some people. You children know. You must tell us older people the reason.

There was another mysterious thing in the very atmosphere in which Tom lived just now. He knew very well that his father once in a while went over to the priest's house and spent an hour or two in the evening there. Once in a very long time Father Fowler would come to dine with his father and mother and William. This was very seldom, but twice lately, when he had come home from school in his hurricane fashion, Tom had run against Father Fowler in his mother's parlor.

Once he had seen, from a distance, his father and the priest in earnest conversation on the street corner near the church, and although the youngster could not have explained it, yet he was what philosophers would call subconscious that they had been talking about him and had

changed to a less important topic when he came up.

All this set Tom Losely: Boy a-thinkin' and a-thinkin' and a-thinkin' in true boyish fashion. What could it all mean? Perhaps, after all — perhaps — but no, he was not going to delude himself with that thought. October had come and gone. He had received his reward, too, yet so different from what he had expected. Yet, perhaps it might be — who knows but, perhaps, after all, Father Fowler might — but no, Tom would not permit himself to form definitely his thoughts into words. To his loyal little heart it seemed like treason. And yet, after all, there might —

He stopped short again, and began to throw at some sparrows.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TOM HAS AN IDEA

ERNEST and Kate and Johnny and little Madelaine all came up from the country in due time. It would be a mistake to imagine that these country children came up to town to wonder and be patronized by their city cousins. There was no occasion for it. The time has long passed in by far the greater number of our states, except, perhaps, in some very remote districts, for much distinction to be made between city and country children.

It is, indeed, claimed by some who say they know what they are talking about that nowadays country children are, as a rule, better bred than their city cousins. In how many farmhouses are there not in these days telephones and electric lights? Musical instruments, the best magazines, and many of the nicer conveniences of life are found there. Then those angels upon earth, those good teaching Sisters, are in these latter days almost everywhere, spreading their benign and elevating influence over the land like God's benediction. It has been truly said that we shall

never know until the last great day, when all things shall be revealed, what omnipresent good the religious orders of women have done for our country. A parish is badly off, nowadays, that is without its Sisters.

Esther and Tom and Gerald and Lenny were thrown into an ecstasy of delight when they saw the cab containing their cousins stop at the door. All the children and their mother, and Jane also, waited on the door-step until they should come up and receive a warm welcome.

Why did the children linger around the cab door? Presently a hand was seen inside pushing out a good-sized wicker hamper. It was too large for Ernest to carry up the steps, so Tom rushed down to help him.

Yet the children still lingered around the step of the cab.

“Come, children; come in out of the cold,” called Mrs. Losely; but the cousins did not move. A good-sized wicker basket was also handed out of the cab and put down on the sidewalk. It was evidently very heavy. Kate and Esther could scarcely lift it.

The visiting cousins had remained silent, as children do when they have a surprise in store. The surprise came when, suddenly, from the cab sprang out that friend of all children, and the special favorite of Tom — George Wood.

Dr. Losely, riding up in his buggy at that instant, jumped out and warmly shook the young fellow's hand.

"Welcome, Wood, welcome, indeed! I am very glad to see you. We will give you a pleasant week, I am sure."

How all the children shouted with glee when they saw George on the sidewalk, his handsome face wreathed in smiles and his eyes speaking the gratitude his lips were unable to express.

That morning Tom's father had received a letter from his brother, who said that so great was his appreciation of George's faithful services that he intended to send him with the children.

"As I know," the letter went on, "you will gladly welcome him for the children's sake, yet I beg you to be very careful, for at the least word that he could construe as a hint that he was not welcome he would vanish from your house. A wild horse would not keep him if he thought he was not welcome, which I am sure he will be."

The hamper contained two large turkeys ready-dressed for cooking. The big basket was George's own present to the city children. It was filled with chestnuts, wood nuts, walnuts, and hickory nuts, which he, at odd moments, had gathered during the fall.

You children will have to imagine all the fun they had with George, and all the fun George

had with them, because it is now necessary to relate an experience which, while it lasted, was extremely unpleasant for Master Tom.

In one of the early chapters of this history of Tom Losely's doings it was stated that Jane could, when the occasion called for it, "put her foot down," with a force that amounted to something like a moral concussion. The occasion happened during the Christmas week, and it all came about in this wise:

Tom Losely, who, as we know, served the Christmas Masses, had coaxed Father Fowler to allow his cousin Ernest to appear in cassock and surplice on the altar on the great feast. The Father finally consented, having learned that Ernest knew the Mass prayers very well, although he had never been present at a solemn ceremonial in a big, city church. Tom took Ernest as partner and told him what to do. The two succeeded very well.

The pastor preached a short but eloquent sermon at the four o'clock Mass, recommending his congregation to seek out the poor and destitute of the parish on this holy day and supply them, in honor of the infant Saviour, with at least one good meal, so that for one day all might be happy.

This recommendation impressed Master Tom very much. He knew he could not put the ad-

vice into practice that day, but he determined to do so some time during the week.

Tom knew that Digger, the ball-player and discoverer of angle-worms, was very poor, living in a shanty not more than three blocks from his father's house.

The two boys, Tom and Ernest, after much consulting together, finally resolved to follow Father Fowler's advice, and selected the said Digger as the subject upon which to bestow their charity.

On Holy Innocents' day they had watched Jane all day long. It was not until about five o'clock that she left the kitchen and went upstairs to her room. Now was their time.

Procuring a basket, they entered the pantry to see what they could secure for poor, hungry Digger.

They saw an abundance of cakes, white bread, plum bread, and oranges on the shelves, together with a large supply of George's chestnuts and hickory nuts not yet consumed. There was a barrel of apples, ripe and rosy, in the corner.

A couple of oranges and several apples went into the basket. Ah! here were some sweet cookies, piled high on a plate ready for the supper-table. A goodly share of these found their way into the basket.

“A hungry boy can't live on cookies,” said

Tom, magnanimously; “let’s see if we can’t find something else.”

Searching around, they at length found a dish full of patties.

“They must be a new kind of tart,” said Tom; “let’s see what they are like.”

He took up one of the delicate, feathery little pies. It was about the size of the old-fashioned Christmas mince pies. Breaking it in two, he gave half to Ernest.

Both tasted the unknown patty. There was a funny, comical look in each pair of eyes as the two boys faced each other. “What was it?” each appeared to ask the other. It was extraordinarily good, whatever it was. Neither was long in demolishing his half. Tom thought the pastry had a very “more — ish” taste.

“U — um! that’s good,” said Tom, smacking his lips in delight.

“What are they made of, Ernest?”

“ ‘Tain’t beef, that’s sure,” said the boy addressed.

“I guess I know,” said Tom, as he struck an attitude. “I heard pa tell ma yest’day that he was going down to the old French market to try to get a hunch of venison. (Tom meant haunch.) I do believe they are venison patties.”

Now, Jane’s patties, and her venison patties in particular, were her special pride and glory.

She made them only on very great occasions. When she did make them and serve them with a delicious currant jelly, that was an event in the household. This only occurred on very special high days, holidays and bon-fire nights. The intelligent reader will discover why they were made on this occasion.

The discovery of the patties was of great importance to the boys. Wasn't a venison patty or two just the thing to make the poor of the parish happy, as Father Fowler had recommended? Nothing could be more fortunate—for Digger!

They put eight or nine into the basket, closed the lid, escaped safely from the pantry and went out the kitchen door and down the alley in a hurry.

Arriving at the shanty, Tom gave a loud knock on the tumble-down door. An ill-clad and untidy woman opened it.

“Is Digger here, ma'am?” asked Tom.

“Digger! Digger! Who's Digger? Who do you mean? I don't know any one of that name,” said the woman.

“Oh! that's his nick-name, 'cause he can dig worms for fishin'. Is Jun Colts here?”

Jun, alias Digger, was at the door by this time.

“What yer want, Tom Losely?” said that

worthy, with some amount of pugnacity in his voice.

“Hello, Digger! Ain’t seen you since base-ball time — since the fight,” said Tom, quite forgetting his errand.

“What yer want? Are ye come for a fight? If so, I’m ready,” and the incipient pugilist began to roll up the cuffs of his sleeves.

“Shut up, you young brat. Don’t you see the young gentleman has a basket?” said his mother, in a half-whisper. The fire did not go out of Digger’s eyes, although, for prudent reasons, he remained silent.

“Father Fowler,” began Tom, as if he were repeating a class lesson, “told us Chris’mas night that we was to seek out somebody and make ‘em happy by giving them something to eat.”

“He did so,” said the woman, “but ne’er a one came this way, ill luck to it.”

This was said with more or less bitterness, which, of course, was lost on one so young as our giver of alms.

“We’ve come, Mrs.—Mrs. Digger,” said Tom, as he blushed and stammered —“Mrs. Colts, I mean.”

The woman waited, grim-visaged. Tom blurted out:

“Here’s some patties for you and Digger,

what Jane cooked. They're good, ain't they, Ernest?"

Ernest duly vouched for them. So good were they that he ardently longed for some more of them. The woman took the basket most ungraciously, Tom thought. Putting the eight patties, the two oranges, the four apples, and the cookies on the bare table, she said:

"Tell your mother we are very much obliged to her."

"Oh, my! Ma don't know nothing about it," blurted out Tom.

"How's that?" asked the sour-faced woman, sharply.

"Ernest and I — he's my cousin — Ernest and I went into the pantry and helped ourselves," said Tom.

"Ye did! Well, when ye get home there'll be trouble for ye then, that's sure. Rich folks don't send round venison patties to the likes of us, although your father does look after my rheumatism for nothing."

Young Digger, listening intently to the conversation, and realizing in some sort of way that the unexpected delicacies were not altogether secure, began at once to demolish one of them, for which he duly received a savage "cuff" from his mother, much after the manner of an old she bear cuffing her cub.

At the woman's really ungracious words, under the circumstances, Tom Losely for the first time began to have some misgivings. Neither of the boys was prepared for the storm they had aroused, and which burst upon them as soon as they reached home.

"Is that you, Tommy?" called his mother, as soon as she heard some one come into the kitchen.

"Yes, ma; it's me and Ernest."

"Come up here at once."

By the tone of his mother's voice Tom knew at once there was trouble in store.

"Where have you been, sir?"

"Down to Digger's shanty, ma."

"What for? But wait — have you been in Jane's pantry?"

Jane held her breath for the answer. Thoroughly angry as she was, in her innermost heart she hoped to hear a denial from her favorite, although she had at once laid the misdemeanor at his door.

There was, as we have already seen, one especially good trait about Tom. He might act thoughtlessly, and even knowingly do wrong; but no one ever knew Tom Losely to lie. He never tried to screen himself from consequences behind a falsehood. He was very much frightened now, and his face was quite white. Ernest had already begun to whimper.

“Answer me, Thomas. Have you been into the pantry?”

“Yes, ma,” said Tom, just above a whisper, but bravely.

“There! there! oh! oh! oh!” said the excited Jane, as she wrung her hands.

“What did you take?” asked his mother.

“We—I took some goodies, as Father Fowler told us Chris’mas.”

“That wasn’t all,” put in Jane.

“And some of those little pies.”

“There! Didn’t I tell you, ma’am, it was sure to be Master Tom. You naughty boy! Oh! you bad boy; giving away my venison patties!”

“Oh! Jane!”

“Don’t Jane me. I just think you are taking leave of your senses, you naughty boy.. I guess I’ll leave, ma’am. I can’t stand such goings-on.”

“Oh! Jane! Jane! You are not going away!” cried Tom in horror, and he began to cry. He immediately forgot all his own misdeeds.

“Jane! Jane dear! You won’t go away from us! Oh! Jane!” The cry of distress was genuine. What was the loss of a few patties to the loss of Jane? She, faithful domestic, looked at it in a different light. What was the loss of Jane to the loss of her celebrated Christmas pastry? Tom really loved the faithful domestic, as

did all the other children. Suddenly, before his mother could stop him, he shouted up-stairs to the play-room:

“Esther, Gerald, Lenny, come quick; Jane’s going to run away!”

The children came flocking down, accompanied by their cousins, aghast at such terrible news. They all began to cry. Esther clung around Jane’s neck, and Master Tom, too, managed to get up pretty close to her.

“What are you going away for, Jane?” asked Esther.

“For feeding them with my venison patties.”

“Didn’t Father Fowler say we were to feed the hungry, Jane dear?” coaxed Tom.

“Oh, Jane,” pleaded Esther, “Tom didn’t mean to. He didn’t know. He thought he was charitable, didn’t you, Tom?”

“Sure; and them Diggers was awful hungry, too. You wouldn’t let people be hungry at Chris’mas, would you, Jane?”

Jane began to smile in spite of herself. The children’s demonstrations of affection for her had driven away a great portion of her anger, yet her ill humor was not altogether appeased. She did not want to surrender completely to the children clinging about her. Woman-like, she compromised.

"Well, ma'am, if I stay, Master Tom has got to be punished for stealing them patties."

"Of course he is to be punished. Thomas, go to your room and stay there until I send for you. Now, Jane, it is for you to say how long his punishment shall last."

"Oh! I feel so mad I'd like to keep him there for a whole month, that I do."

Tom, holiday time though it was, with a house full of cousins as guests, went to his room in disgrace. This was certainly hard lines for poor Tom, yet he was somewhat satisfied this time when he considered what a storm he had raised.

He threw himself on his bed and, of course, had a good cry. When he listened to the merry laughter and the romping of the children below, he came to the realization that life was not worth living for a certain ill-used individual known by the name of Thomas Samuel Ignatius Losely.

He had not been in durance vile for more than half an hour, when he heard a gentle rap at the door. He feigned sleep because he was sulky. He heard the door-knob turn and from the corner of his eye he saw some one standing at his bedside with a plate in one hand and a glass of fresh milk in the other.

"Tommy?"

The boy remained passive, feigning sleep.

"Tommy, Tommy dear."

Still no answer.

“Oh! I do hope the child has not been frightened into being sick,” he heard some one say. This was a cue for him. He heaved a deep sigh.

“Are you sick, Tommy?”

“I don’t feel very good,” was the ambiguous answer. He then opened his eyes and saw — Jane.

She could not stand to have her favorite punished, although while she was angry she insisted that it should be so. She had also discovered that by no means all the patties had been abstracted from the pantry shelf. At her first glance she thought they were all gone. They had merely fallen from the dish, and as the shelf was rather high, were hidden from her sight.

“I’ve brought you your supper, Tommy, and as soon as you’ve eaten it, the children and Mr. George are waiting for you to play ‘blind man’s bluff.’”

With strange inconsistency, of which kindly people are sometimes capable, she had brought him for his supper two of those very venison miniature pies about which so much fuss had been made.

When he saw these, Tom jumped to his feet in a minute.

“Oh! Jane, you’re a — a duck!”

It was hard to imagine why Jane had been so

angry at this one scrape of Tom's, when so many times before he had gone unscathed. The doctor and his wife were puzzled to find a reason for it. After the storm had blown over, the children enjoyed themselves more than ever.

"I know something," he said one day a week later to Jane, in the kitchen.

"What do you know?"

"Oh! I know something."

"Well, if you know something, what is it?"

"I know why you were so mad about the parties the other night!"

"You do, eh? I do not think you do. Why was I?"

"Oh! I know!"

"Well, say it, if you do."

Tom first got near the open door.

"'Cause you thought they were all gone and there was none left for George!"

The broom that was in Jane's hand was raised threateningly, but Tom was half-way up-stairs before she could get around the kitchen table. She called up the stairs after him:

"Tommy Losely, if I catch you down here in my kitchen for a week I'll — give you a beating with this broom."

But Tom went down into the kitchen long before the prescribed time. George and the cousins went back to the country the day after New

Year's day. The flight from the broomstick occurred two days before the feast of the Epiphany, which was Master Tom Losely's birthday, and, of course, it would never do for that young gentleman to be in Jane's bad books on such a day.

Rushing into the house in the middle of the morning of the feast-day, in his usual whirlwind fashion, Tom had been surprised to see Father Fowler talking to his mother in the parlor. The good priest shook hands with his friend, congratulated him on his birthday, and soon after left. Tom did not know for certain, but he thought he had interrupted a conversation between the priest and his mother about himself. Then those October thoughts revived — thoughts which had ceased during November and early December, but which had come back to him as Christmas approached.

“Perhaps, on my birthday —” Tom began to think, but he stopped himself, and once more went out to throw stones at the sparrows. The birthday dinner was a great event. Jane had put forth all her skill. Tom often sighed for very happiness during its progress.

His mother looked lovingly on her boy. Dr. Losely and William, less demonstrative than the women folk, kept up a strange nodding and winking that marvelously puzzled happy Tom,

After coffee and the fruit, big brother William, at a nod from his father, mysteriously left the room. Presently, from the drawing-room, the family heard William give a cough as a signal. Mrs. Losely and Esther rose. The doctor held the door for his wife, and as William was momentarily absent, that duty fell to Tom to allow his sister to pass. Tom had received many a lesson in etiquette, but to-day he was more punctilious than ever.

Thus it happened that father and mother, William and Esther entered the drawing-room before him. Why were they standing before some object as if to hide it from his sight?

Suddenly the four separated, two on each side, and Master Tom Losely saw a vision which sent the blood to his face, and made the lad's eyes sparkle like diamonds.

Before him, leaning against the drawing-room table, stood a brand new — wheel, a birthday present from his friend and “’viser,” Father Fowler. Happy Tom!

We are simply incapable of expressing in cold words Tom's state of mind — his beatitude. Nor could we describe the scene that followed ten minutes later over in Father Fowler's study, but leave to the imagination of the reader to picture the happiness of Tom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOM AND GERALD

Tom and Gerald were the greatest chums imaginable. They loved each other very dearly. It was only in the summer vacation, when young Fred Thorncroft was home from school, that the two brothers ceased to be inseparable. Fred was a much better baseball-player than Gerald. This easily explains the apparent desertion for the two months.

Soon after their cousins had returned to the country, and the Sisters' academy had begun classes again for the new year, there came a soft, heavy fall of snow, much to the delight of the two boys. They found immense fun in it, although it prevented them from playing marbles.

Gerald was rather delicate. He easily caught cold, which sometimes settled on his lungs. The way that Master Tom would wade in water over his shoe-tops, go out of a warm room into a freezing temperature hatless, with his throat and chest exposed to the winds of heaven, and do many other similar pranks, without incurring the least harm, would make one think he was

weather-proof and could safely defy the inclemencies of the seasons. Tom was sturdy and strong for his years, inquisitive, and as we already know — a real boy. He seemed to be growing more inquisitive every day.

“Ma,” he said one day, “why do they call the boy next door Harry Gates?”

“Because that’s his name, isn’t it?”

“But he’s only one.”

“One what?”

“One Gate.”

“One little boy whose name is Gates.”

“Then he and his baby brother are the two Gateses.”

“Well?”

“Then the two doors in this room are the two doorses, aren’t they? But, ma, can you play marbles?”

“Tommy! What a question to ask your mother! But I think I could if it were necessary. Why do you ask?”

“’Cause I want you and me to stump Gerald and win all his marbles. Oh! wouldn’t it be fun! I dare you, ma, I dare you.”

The challenge was not taken up. For thirty seconds there was a cessation from the bombardment of young Quicksilver’s questions. The peace was soon broken.

“Where’s Esther, ma?”

"Your sister has gone over to the north side to your Aunt Eliza's to tea. She went before you returned from school. Jane went with her."

"Can't Gerald and I go, too?"

"No; neither of you was invited."

"What's 'vited mean, ma?"

"Being asked."

"Can't we ask ourselves? Mr. Thomas Lose-
ly, you is now 'vited to go to Aunt Eliza's for
tea."

"What nonsense you talk!" said his mother,
laughing. "Where's Gerald?"

"He's out in the garden, feeding his rabbits."

"Run out to him and play for half an hour.
As Jane is away, I want to make some buckwheat
cakes for your supper."

"Whoop! and maple 'lasses, too?"

"Yes, you will have some maple syrup on
them if you behave yourself and do not quarrel
from now till supper-time."

Tom pursed up his lips and drew in a long
breath with a hissing sound, indicative of antici-
pated pleasure. "All right, ma. We'll be good
— see if I don't," and with this unconscious tes-
timony that he was generally the cause of the
quarrels, the young madcap started for the door.

"Where are you going, Tommy?"

"Out into the yard, ma."

“Without a hat, and with your coat and vest all open?”

“Oh, bother! ma. I don’t want a cap. When I button these things up they won’t stay buttoned, and I can’t get ‘round, neither.”

The youngster appeared to have no trouble to “get ‘round,” for a minute later he had made half a dozen snow-balls on the kitchen porch, and had proceeded to attack his brother at the other end of the yard with them. The snow-balls flew in both directions rapidly. As Tom dodged well he was seldom hit. The kitchen door came in for a good cannonading, until Mrs. Losely opened the kitchen window.

“Stop that snow-balling, children. I am afraid you will break the windows. Go away from the house and play.”

This put an end to this kind of fun. The garden was a rather long one, so when the boys went to the other end there was temporary quiet around the house. For the next half hour the two boys were busy building up a snow-man.

Occasionally the mother cast a glance through the kitchen window to see what her boys were doing.

“God bless their innocent hearts and keep them good and pure,” she said, as she put the finishing touches to the supper-table.

“Come, boys, supper’s ready,” she called from the kitchen door.

“All right, mamma, we are coming just as soon as we have made King Frost’s eyes,” and the two boys put pieces of coal in the snow head for eyes, another piece for a nose, and stuck a wooden stick for a cigar in the place where his mouth was supposed to be.

They then started in a mad race for the kitchen door. Both rushed into the room out of breath, with cheeks rosy from the cold, but with clothes dripping wet from handling the soft snow.

“What boys you are for getting into mischief! Your coats are wet through. For once you may take your supper in your shirt-sleeves. Here, Tommy, put them by the kitchen fire to dry.”

It is needless to say that, with such appetites as building snow-men and snow-balling is wont to create, the buckwheat cakes vanished like mist before the wind.

After supper, when grace had been said, Mrs. Losely remarked:

“Your father, boys, telephones that he has some important cases at the hospital and will not be home till late. As Esther and Jane are away, I want you both to help wash the dishes. After study-time, which we will make a little shorter to-night, we will have a game of Snap.”

“All right, ma,” responded Tom. “You

just sit in that chair. We will wash up, and you boss the job."

"I do what!" asked the mother, with a displeased frown. "Isn't that slang, Tommy?"

"Oh, bother! Forgive me, mamma dear; I forgot that time. I won't use a slang word again."

Tom, the young coax, suspended the washing operations to climb into his mother's lap and extort, by the very force of his own bright winsomeness, the pardoning kiss.

CHAPTER XXV.

QUICKSILVER

WASHING dishes was no new work for the two elder boys. They were frequently pressed into service by Jane or their mother. Tom was even known, once or twice, to have volunteered, but then the prospect of the reward from Jane was, on these occasions, exceedingly bright.

Mrs. Losely never objected to her boys' learning housework. In consequence of previous experience, therefore, there was no greater catastrophe this evening than a broken saucer and the knocking off the handle of one teacup. Not so bad for boys, and small boys at that.

The study-time this evening was a period of comparative rest for Mrs. Losely. For the boys, of course, it was laborious. Tom frequently gave evidence of the onerous nature of the work by violently swinging one leg under the table until at last the lamp gave a great jump. Some other method of helping or urging the brain to activity had to be tried.

He planted his elbows firmly on the table, and

ran his fingers through his curly hair again and again, until his head resembled a bunch of furze.

This failing of the desired effect, he thought he could draw inspiration from the sound of the cat's voice. This was produced by a vigorous pulling of that animal's tail, which, by some peculiar coincidence, when inspiration was wanted, was always in close proximity to Tom's hand. It is astonishing how means sometimes adapt themselves to the end.

This evening Gerald was unusually restless. Generally a good, quiet student — much better, it must be confessed, than our Tom was — he was annoyed to find he could learn nothing. His head began to ache. There was a feverish glitter in his eyes and his face was flushed. More than once he coughed in a deep, sepulchral way that portended anything from whooping-cough to rapid consumption. Less robust than Tom, he had caught a bad cold while building up the snowman.

“Mamma,” said Gerald, after about half an hour at his books, “I can not learn any more to-night. My head aches, and it's so hot.”

“Put away your books, children, for to-night,” said Mrs. Losely, “and you, Gerald, lie on the lounge for awhile. Now, Tommy, don't bother your brother, because he is not well and you may make him worse.”

Mercurial Tom was sobered for the nonce. He was frightened. What if Gerald should die! What if he should lose his chum and friend! That was too dreadful to contemplate. A big lump rose in Master Tom Losely's throat.

"Say, Ger, you ain't going to die now, are you?"

The thought put into words was too much for the little fellow, and he began to boo-hoo at the mere possibility.

"Stupid!" said Gerald, ungraciously, "who said I was going to die? You're like a girl. Just 'cause I got a little cold — you ain't got no sense."

Tom felt relieved. If Gerald could talk that way it could not be so very bad. The tears passed like an April shower.

Mrs. Losely, as soon as she saw Gerald was unwell, set about making some warm drink for him. The whole proceeding was a mystery to the elder brother. All he knew was that there was a most savory odor permeating the kitchen.

"My! um! that smells good! Am I going to get some of that, too, ma?"

"We shall see, bye and bye," said his mother; "it all depends on how well you behave this evening."

What was it that got into Tom? Try as he would, he could not be "good" for longer than

five minutes at a time. Everything about the room seemed put there for the express purpose of preventing him from being "good."

There was papa's riding-whip in the corner. He had often cracked it before. Why could he not do so now? Crack! crack! went the whip on the kitchen table.

"Mother, make Tom stop making that noise. He knows I've got a headache."

"Thomas!" said his mother, severely. She was busy at the kitchen range, but he knew what the tone meant.

He was quiet exactly three minutes. Then the cat once more attracted his attention. Why do cats wear such long tails? Cautiously creeping under the kitchen table, he caught that usually persecuted domestic animal and tried to add an inch to its tail. The cat objected. She evinced her objection in a series of strident howls, tolerable at night and in the distance, but unbearable within the four walls of a room.

Once more Tom found himself in disgrace. His chance of sharing the good things his mother was preparing for his brother was growing less and less.

His next mishap was to upset a flower-stand. At this he was much frightened and expected condign punishment. It did not come, for his mother saw this was an accident.

“ I didn’t mean to, mamma ; it was an accident, sure.”

“ I do wish my boy would be more careful when I am busy preparing something for Gerald’s cold.”

The danger was past. Hope of sharing the good things preparing rose again in his breast. His spirits rose too as the danger receded. He was quiet and out of mischief for fully four minutes, but the imp of mischief was busy within him.

Jane was a country girl, and liked to drink water out of a “ dipper,” as she used to do in her childhood. She always kept one near the drinking-tap.

Suddenly a thought struck Tom Losely. He wanted a drink. When he had slaked his thirst, he took the dipper, half full of icy cold water, behind the lounge where Gerald was lying with his eyes closed. Standing at Gerald’s head, he let two or three drops from the outside of the dipper fall on the sick boy’s head.

“ Te-he-he-he ! ” chuckled Tom.

Whether Tom was so much amused at the success of his trick that he wanted to repeat it, or his chuckling destroyed the steadiness of his nerves, it is hard to say, but at that instant the dipper tipped in his hand and a plentiful stream of water flowed down poor Gerald’s neck.

"Oh! oh! make him stop! He's throwing cold water down my back!" shouted the discomfited invalid.

Scapegrace was surely in for trouble this time.

"You naughty boy," said his mother, "go to bed at once."

"Oh, ma! can't I —"

"Go! go at once. I have a great mind to give you a whipping."

Tom had gone too far this time. He was dismissed in disgrace, and to that place where a healthy boy hates above all others to go, if it be early in the evening.

It must be admitted that Tom said that night a very hasty set of prayers, lacking in the usual devotion. In about half an hour he heard his mother bring Gerald to his room next to his own.

When she had gone, Tom fell a-thinking. Was it right to treat poor Gerald that way; was it right to pull the cat's tail; or crack the whip; or knock over the flower-stand, all when his poor brother Gerald was so unwell?

As is the case with all generous boys, he magnified his own faults. He became more and more displeased with himself. To-morrow he would behave better; he would be extra kind to Gerald. He would give him all his marbles, his top, and his wonderful box kite. Surely that would make amends.

Nevertheless his tender conscience would not let him sleep, notwithstanding all these good resolutions, until he had "made up" with Gerald that very night. Slipping out of bed, he opened his door and rapped gently on Gerald's.

"Who's there?" asked his brother in a hoarse whisper.

"Me, Gerry. I couldn't go to sleep before I begged your pardon. Cross my heart, Gerry, I didn't mean to throw that water on you — only a few drops on your head. How's your fever?"

"I'm better now, Tom dear. I'll be all right in the morning. I know you didn't mean it."

"Good night, Gerry, dear, gimme a kiss," and with that seal of reconciliation, Tom, with a lightened heart, jumped into bed again and was soon in the fairyland of an innocent boy's dreams.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'A NARROW ESCAPE

ONE day a few weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter, Sister Juliana had watched Tom Losely nearly all during class. It was the season of the year which begets restlessness, for the first few warm days of spring had come and the academy grounds were dry enough for playing thereon.

The boy had been unusually restive on this particular day. He had failed completely to repeat any one of the tenses of the indicative mood of the verb "to love," which was his lesson for that day. His spelling lesson had fared as badly. A new geography would have to be written if Tom Losely were taken as an authority on rivers and boundaries. He seemed full of mercury, unable to sit still a minute.

He snapped his fingers (always forbidden) when answering, or at least when he imagined he knew an answer. When the spirit of mischief seized him, he began drawing ink figures or, to speak more accurately, attempted to draw ink figures, on the broad collar of the boy in front

of him. Sister Juliana then decided he had gone far enough.

“After class, Thomas Losely,” she said, sternly. All the boys in Sister Juliana’s room knew what these words meant.

“I wasn’t doing nothing, Sister, sure; I did nothing all day.”

So far as studies went, the latter half of the sentence was literally true.

“Then you can make up for lost time after school,” said the Sister.

“But, Sister, I —”

“Never mind, now, Tommy. We’ll see all about it after class-time.”

When school was dismissed that afternoon Tom had to remain behind. He seemed unwontedly affected on this particular day, so that the Sister thought for a moment that perhaps she had been a little too severe.

“Tommy Losely.”

“Yessum.”

“You’ve been very troublesome to-day.”

“—sum,” in a whisper. He was standing on his heels and knocking the sides of the soles of his shoes together.

“Do you not think you deserve to be kept in?”

By giving a direct answer Tom would con-

demn himself out of his own mouth. He evaded a direct reply.

“I want to play ball in our class against Sister Josephine’s room this afternoon, Sister. It’s the first game of the season. Oh! we’re going to have great fun s’afternoon. Say, Sister Juliana, I’ll be good to-morrow, sure I will. Can’t I play now?”

The good nun did not respond to this touching appeal.

“I saw a little boy in the yard before class this afternoon mimicking some one. Do you know who he was?”

Madcap’s eyes began to sparkle. He forgot his troubles and his threatened punishment. His face became full of laughing mischief really good to see.

“That was me, S’ter. Harry Higgins bet me his ‘tiger eye’ that I could not take off the man that passes the academy every morning and afternoon. He lives just down the street from here. I bet Harry I could. Oh! he’s such a dood. He wears bangs, like Esther’s, down near to his eyebrows, and he walks like this —” and the young mimic began to imitate a mincing gait very cleverly.

“Coming to school ’safternoon, I walked up behind him and imitated him. Then all the boys

laughed an' Hig said I won the bet. Well, when he seed me, he turns and —”

“ Seed! Tommy!” said the teacher.

“ Seen — when he seen me —”

“ Worse still!”

“ Saw! that's it. When he saw me, he turned round and put his ‘ glawse,’ as he calls it, to his eye, and looked down at me like this,” and the young impersonator stuck a round piece of blotting paper in his right eye, elevated his elbow, and looked down as if he were examining a frog.

“ Then he said,” continued the boy, “ ‘ You are a werry wude boy to imichate your superiors, don't-cher-know.’ Then I says, ‘ Thanks, awfully, Mr.— Mr. Fitzgoblins — that's your name, isn't it?’ Then all the boys laughed again, and the dood made for me with his cane and I had to skip. Then the horrid old bell rang and we had to come into school. But my! it was fun, Sister, and he couldn't have caught me, either.”

The last statement the good Sister fully believed. She was secretly very much amused and had a hard struggle to keep a straight face, as the occasion demanded.

“ When I came into the class-room you were making all sorts of antics.”

“ They weren't antics, Sister; it was my bet. I was showing the boys how it was done.”

It must be confessed that, notwithstanding all

the sister's care, Tom's grammar, like his exterior actions on some occasions, was woefully bad.

Just at that moment the young Quicksilver looked out of the window, and saw with dismay that the captain of his class-room nine, tired of waiting for him, had chosen a substitute and that the boys were about to begin the first game of the season.

"Oh! oh! oh! Sister, they've put Robbie Smith on first base in my place an' he can't play a little bit. Oh! our room is going to get licked, oh! oh!" Tom actually danced around in an agony of disappointment.

Finally, he cast one appealing look at his teacher.

"I think," said Sister Juliana, slowly and seriously, while Tom's jaw dropped in dismay, momentarily, "I think I will — let you off this time."

"You will!! whoop!"

The youngster again began to dance about the room, this time for very joy.

"And you'll come out, Sister, and see the game?"

"Yes. I'll come out presently into the school-yard."

"And you'll shout for our room?"

"Well — no — not exactly, although I want them to win. But I want a promise from you,

Tommy, before you go. I want you to promise to try to keep quiet in school."

Tom was serious for exactly seventeen seconds. That was long enough for him.

"All right, Sister, you just see. I'll do my very hardest best, sure. Cross my heart if I don't, there!"

After that, any one who knows anything about boys will be sure that Master Tom Losely was in earnest. One minute more, and the mercurial, troublesome, fun-loving and altogether delightful little fellow was bounding down the stairs, three steps at a time and shouting at the top of his voice.

The next day Tommy began his class work well, but his vivacious temperament prevented him from remaining quiet for any length of time. Sister Juliana, however, thought she saw an attempt at improvement, and was satisfied with a good beginning. The last thing this experienced teaching Sister would do would be to make a boy's education a tragedy, although she took special care that it was by no means a farce, or all comedy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“MY! IT HURTED!”

THE day after Tom's narrow escape from punishment was confession day at the academy. All the classes, one after another, were taken to the church, which was in the same block, and Father Fowler and his assistants heard the regular monthly confessions.

Sister Juliana noticed that after the other children of Tom Losely's class had said their penance, made their thanksgiving and left, Tom stayed an unusual time in the church. The nun, who was instructing Tom for his first communion, which was to take place at the end of May, was expecting some unusual development on the part of Tom, but she was totally unprepared for what happened on the following Monday morning.

The children were not allowed to play in the yard before the daily Mass in the church which they all attended, but each went to his or her class-room to review the lessons of the day until the bell rang for Mass.

That Monday morning Sister Juliana happened

to go into her class-room fully five minutes earlier than the earliest boy was accustomed to arrive. Opening the door suddenly, the teacher saw Tom Losely standing on one leg in a corner of the room, with his face to the wall. On one bared arm was a drop of blood, midway between the wrist and the elbow.

"Good morning, Tommy Losely," said the teacher in a very surprised voice. "What on earth are you doing, Tommy?"

The boy, thus caught, blushed violently, put his raised foot to the ground, and hurriedly pulled down the sleeve of his coat.

"What are you doing, Tommy?" again asked Sister Juliana.

"I don't like to say, Sister," said the little fellow, who this time appeared to be actually bashful — a most unusual proceeding with him.

"But I want to know."

"You won't tell, Sister?"

"No, if you do not wish it."

"Cross your heart?"

"I promise, Tommy. Isn't that enough?"

"Well, Sister, it was — pins," said the boy, who seemed very much relieved by the confession. He evidently expected the nun to understand at once the situation. This she was very far from doing.

"Pins! What do you mean by pins?"

“This is how, Sister. I went to confession Saturday afternoon. Then I began to think how awful wicked I was. Mocking the dood Fitz-goblin wasn’t right at all. Then I was naughty lots o’ times in school, Sister. I pricked Tom Steele Saturday morning, and he got a penance for screaming out. He didn’t give me away, though. He’s a brick — that’s what he is. And I put water down Gerald’s back when he was sick, and there was heaps an’ heaps of other things, too. So I thought I was a pretty bad boy, and so I tried pins.”

“You tried pins! I do not understand. What do you mean? You have not been swallowing them, I hope.”

“No! Say, Sister, Harry Gates, who lives next door, says when he does naughty things, and screams and kicks his sister when he has to go to bed — he says when he has said his prayers he always pinches hisself for being naughty. Now, it’s girlish to pinch, ain’t it? I ain’t no girl, so I thought the best thing when I was naughty was pins.”

“And you have been pricking yourself with a pin until you made your arm bleed?”

“Just one jab, honest, Sister; and my! it hurted!”

“I should think so. Tommy?”

“Yessum,”

"You are a good boy —"

"Not much, Sister; but I mean to —"

"Exactly. You mean to be in the future, especially in view of your coming first communion. Now, Tommy, listen to me. You believe in confession?"

The Sister used a purposely doubtful tone.

"Of course. Didn't I go to Father Wells's first-confession class, and didn't I see —"

"Never mind that now. You believe the priest has power to forgive sins?"

"Sure. Isn't it in the catechism?"

"And that the penance the priest gives in the Sacrament of Penance is a sufficient satisfaction?"

"Through the merits of Christ, Sister. That's in the catechism, too."

"Very well, then. Now I want you to promise me one thing."

"What is it? To give up pins?" asked the incipient Flagellant.

"It includes that. I want you to promise me to do nothing but what Father Fowler knows and sanctions."

"But I've been awful bad, Sister."

"But don't you know and believe —" began the teacher in her catechetical voice.

"Yes, Sister, yes. I know it all, and I prom-

ise not to have pins again unless my 'viser lets me."

By this the good Sister knew she had gained her point. She felt sure the promise would be kept. Thinking it wise, however, to make an impression, she said:

"Tommy, suppose that prick on your arm should get sore and you should not be able to play ball or anything for a month!"

Quicksilver's eyes opened wide in alarm at the possibility of such a misfortune.

"Do not be frightened. I do not say that such a thing is going to happen, although it might easily enough. Now I have a scheme for you, my child, that will answer much better. Instead of using pins, try to make an extra effort in class, especially when you feel inclined to have some fun."

Tom Losely thought for a moment. During that time there was much running through that busy little head. Sister Juliana saw him nod once or twice. At length he said:

"But, Sister, if the other boys see that, they will laugh and say I am getting to be a sissy boy."

"What do you think of a boy who is not afraid to wound his arm with pins and yet is afraid of a word that another might say to him?"

"But they will laugh."

"Suppose they do? I am not sure they will. Try it and see. If some of the worst do laugh, it won't hurt you, Tom, and they will at the same time think all the more of you. Will you try it?"

"Yes, Sister. I'll be good in class after this."

"Splendid. There's the bell for Mass. Make your intention at Mass this morning for this, and ask our dear Lord and His holy Mother to help you."

An inexperienced teacher would have thought that all her trouble had been thrown away had she been in Sister Juliana's place, for half a minute later she saw Master Tom Losely, contrary to all rules, slide down the stair rail, shout to some other boys when he ought to have been silent, and almost run into the arms of the mistress of schools. Sister Juliana merely walked away with an amused smile.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GREAT DAY

IT WOULD be interesting to know each reader's estimate of Tom Losely's character.

It is quite certain that the discerning reader — one whose heart is still young, who remembers with a quickening of the pulse his own young days — it is quite certain that such a reader will see, notwithstanding the pranks and tricks and fun and exuberance of young life, that Tom is a real boy, a good boy, whose heart is in the right place.

He may often have coaxed and wheedled Jane for cakes and candy. What boy has not done the same to his mother or some good-natured domestic? He would not be a boy unless he had done these things.

Ask Tom's mother or Dr. Losely whether they would not prefer the laughing, bright-eyed, mischievous lad, and a little broken furniture or a broken window-pane now and then, to a sour and surly Tom who would take a sullen pleasure in being alone, be sly and treacherous, with small

or no notions of honor, and unkind and spiteful to his younger brothers.

We know what the choice of our boy and girl readers would be, and the story of Tom, taken from life, but without a plot, has shown him as he really existed in actual flesh and blood.

He has faults. What boy has not? You may notice that with Tom's faults and little wrongdoings there came uppermost nearly always that Catholic instinct of repairing the wrong. When a boy admits his wrongdoing and willingly makes what reparation he can, that boy is made of the right material to grow up into an honorable and loved citizen and good man.

The spring had been partially charming, it having come in very early, bright and warm. On the last Sunday of the month of May the altar of Father Fowler's church was beautifully decorated with lights and flowers. A very important event was to take place that morning. No less than twenty-seven boys and forty girls of the parish were to receive their first holy communion.

Watching the procession come into the church, one sees the little girls, dressed in white, with long white veils, and their heads crowned with white flowers, typical of the purity of their innocent souls.

When the girls had taken their places, there

followed the orderly ranks of the boys. Almost the last came Tom Losely, dressed in a black suit, with a white flower in his coat, wearing white gloves and bearing an ornamented candle in his right hand.

Is this the rollicking, prankish boy whose doings we have been recording? He now looks almost angelic in his devotion.

Yes, that is Tom. The intense devotion of the solemn occasion is not the least incompatible with his character as we know him. Why should the two be inconsistent? Religion, piety, devotion are not those sombre, uncomfortable things some good but mistaken people would make them.

Certainly the Losely family never cultivated a puritanical sombreness in religious matters, and every one knowing Father Fowler or the Sisters would know that Tom and his companions would never learn it from them. The boy was fortunate enough to be brought up with the bright side of religious life turned to him, and in after years he was all the better man for it.

Tom, although not the tallest, was placed last in the procession at the request of his father. This plan was adopted so that the order of the ceremonies might not be spoiled and yet the family be enabled to do something for Tom which was to be a surprise and a life's memory.

As soon as Tom, with his companion, had left

his seat to kneel at the communion-railing to receive for the first time the Bread of Life, the whole Losely family followed him, so that next to Tom knelt his father, then Mrs. Losely, William, Esther, and the good domestic, Jane. Tom's first communion was therefore also a family communion. The boy, when he saw this arrangement, was much touched, and nearly burst out into weeping. Indeed, there were more eyes in that happy family at that happy moment than Tom's that were more than moist, and even Father Fowler's voice was very soft and low when he came to the boy he loved.

May God bless such beautiful practices. How Tom was blessed from that day on will probably form the subject of another sketch, but for the present we leave him on the happiest day of his life with the remark that such as he are the material from which the Catholic portion of our nation is drawn

There are scores, aye thousands, of Tom Loselys throughout the land, who will in time leaven the body politic and stand firm for the eternal principles of truth and right. Some day the country will give the proper recognition to the two great factors of its uplifting — the Catholic family and the Catholic school.

One more glimpse at happy Tom, and we must regretfully leave him.

The evening of that beautiful May day was warm and balmy. The whole family had gathered on the lawn in front of the house. The exultation which Tom had felt all day had not died away as the gloaming approached. The great event of the day appeared to have changed him in some indefinable way. He sat a long time silently watching the stars, engaged in those wonderful thoughts of boyhood. Now and again there was a slight catch in his breath, the effect, as it were, of the lingering ecstatic happiness of the morning. For a time the pleasant chatter of the quiet conversation went on around him unheeded.

“A penny for your thoughts, Tom,” said his father, who thought that he had remained silent an unusually long time.

“Oh! papa, I am so—so happy to-night.”

“Yes, my boy. This has been the greatest day of your life. You are now no longer a mere unthinking boy, but something greater and higher than that now.”

“And holier too, pa,” said the little lad in a low tone and with a kind of awe.

“That is true, my child, and you must let this great event influence your life.”

“Yes, pa, it shall,” said Tom, with a far-away look in his eyes.

“How will you do this, son?”

“ I am going to try to live every day, pa, as I lived to-day.”

“ Yes? ”

“ Didn’t our dear Lord come to me to-day, papa? And I am not going to be naughty again — if I can help it. Oh! I want to be good, and I’m going to try — *ever* so hard.”

“ Good boy! What means will you use to that end? ”

“ I am going to be more faithful in saying my prayers, and I am never going to neglect holy communion. How often may I go, pa? ”

“ That must be decided by your friend Father Fowler.”

“ All right, pa. And I am going to ask our blessed Mother to watch over me and make me grow up a good man, and then, perhaps — I — oh! I don’t know — ”

Tom Losely felt within himself a longing to reach that high ideal ever latent in a good child’s breast, but actuated now by the grace of the sacrament he had received; but being a mere boy, and a small boy at that, he naturally found difficulty in expressing himself.

“ And then what, Tom? ” said his father, gently.

“ And then, perhaps, she will — when I am grown up — perhaps she will let me be — a — priest, like Father Fowler,”

“ My! ” remarked his brother Gerald, who had overheard everything, “ if you want to be a priest, Tom, you can’t play baseball any more! ”

“ I can, too, can’t I, pa? ” replied Tom, with extraordinary vivacity. “ I don’t have to give up that, for Father Fowler, my ’viser, says that one can be a saint and play good ball too — but I ain’t going to steal patties any more or tease Jane.”

This last statement certainly indicated the strength of his good resolution. His whole pronouncement goes to show that, although our little friend was a different boy after his first holy communion, with higher aspirations and holier thoughts and a larger sense of duty and responsibility, still he was the same bright, lovable Tom Losely: Boy.

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